

SERBELLONI

F. W. GILBART-SMITH

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SERBELLONI.

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SERBELLONI

BY

J. W. GILBART-SMITH



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These strains,
That emulously seek
Continuance of the Golden Chain
By elder sages woven into Song,
To such as love

The Ministry of Nature:

Teacher of our race:

Unto my fellowkind
In all good fellowship
I diffidently give.



SEQUENCE OF BOOKS.

The Sequence of *Books* marks Five Epochs of Intellectual Energy. The soul, experienced in the strain of Life, renews its strength in *Resting*; thence entering the *Questioning* stage it is emboldened for *Seeking*, *Attaining*, and even sometimes *Fulfilling*.

ARGUMENT

BOOK I.—RESTING.

I.—A SONG OF COMO.

Two friends, who met at Milan, part after spending some time at Cadenabbia ; one, remaining in Italy, recalls days and scenes on the lake, localities connected with their stay : Cadenabbia, Bellagio, Serbelloni, etc.

II.—A SONG OF SERBELLONI.

Serbelloni—the height above Bellagio, commanding the lakes of Como and Lecco—awakes ancient poetic associations.

III.—A SONG OF TWO CADENABBIAS.

A Lyric of “Counterparts”—suggested by the exquisite reflection of shore and sky on calm water.

IV.—A SONG OF REST.

The necessity for rest is satisfied by the beauty and repose of the scene, but, in

V.—A SONG OF NIGHT AND MEMORY.

A vision of MEMORY, who wakes and weeps by night, reminds him that there are recollections which only death can still.

VI.—A SONG OF CONTRAST.

The friend who has left returns to the surroundings of active life in modern England, an atmosphere of toil, ambition, and struggle ; yet there is also work for him who remains with Nature.

BOOK II.—QUESTIONING.

I.—A SONG OF PINES.—(The Cathedral of Nature.)

At first he listens in silence to voices in what are to him aisles of ministering song—soothed, strengthened, and encouraged by subdued light and restful shadow :

II.—A SONG OF NATURE.

And, mid the Italian scenery, where Nature is most winning, would inquire whether she can tell him nothing of her deeper life ?

What is Nature ? What relation does her distinctive existence bear to God, and what to man ?

He feels that she, by her ministering instincts, supplies some link between the human soul and the Divine Spirit : she, that has been through the ages a source of spiritual and of physical life.

III.—A SONG OF DAWN.

He sings of the gradual beginnings of Light :

IV.—A SONG OF GOD IN NATURE.

And of how Nature in her wealth of Universal Power, Beauty, Law, Glory, Life, and Continuity, types attributes of Divinity.

V.—A SONG OF MAN IN NATURE.

She is also replete with laws of life similar in many respects to those found within the human mind : instanced in the Torrent.

VI.—A SONG OF NATURE IN MAN.

Again, in human life, when directly influenced by her, there is something of nature's own calm and spirit : the poet, also

brought near to her by his work, would share in this her blessing.

VII.—A SONG OF TRINITY IN NATURE.

He is drawn to give her precedence of man :

For:—I. Frequently parabled by our Lord, she is an unwritten scripture. II. Having a separate existence from the life of man, she never takes a law from him, but from God. III. Though man fell, *she* fulfils her original mission.

But, though thus before him, and continuous where he is finite, her power to help him is limited. Her patient continuance and unceasing development, through suffering, dormant energy, etc., may encourage him to endure. But life flags without light. So, however knowledge of Nature may soothe, man's aspirations cannot find satisfaction in spiritual darkness.

VIII.—A SONG OF REVOLUTION IN NATURE.

A lyric of Darkness. NATURE is not LIGHT, though she may be its messenger.

BOOK III.—SEEKING.

I.—A SONG OF THE SEEKER.

Therefore, finding Nature insufficient for his need, he determines upon a fresh start,

and seeks from his own consciousness and experience, rather than from external life, to find that which shall satisfy the soul. He still recognises Nature as his teacher, not remembering when he did not look to her for guidance and companionship ; however others deny, misunderstand, ridicule, or misinterpret her.

He would examine :—How ?—When ?—and Why ?—she speaks to him, so that he might see whether others miss her strengthening influences—by fault of their own ? by innate

defect? by failure on the part of Nature to make herself plainly understood? or by her unwillingness to speak generally?

II.—A SONG OF THE SINGER.

Re-living his life, the Poet inquires what his own soul knows. He therefore retraces the stream of thought, feeling, and experience down which his life has hitherto floated. He notes all that touched sensation, sense, or song,—Love, Rest, Ambition, Pleasure, Storm, Sunshine, Sympathy, Doubt, Despair, and Death.

III.—A SONG OF FAILURE.

He has come to no conclusion when at length the barque of Retrospect strands at the beginning of the Stream of personal existence. None of his questions are answered. That he and his soul exist together is all he knows. Contemplating the knowledge of others, he finds that they also make little progress, from age to age, from one period of individual learning to another. Hence there is no more light in EXPERIENCE than he has already found in Nature.

IV.—A SONG OF LETHARGY.

Thus stranded, without link with God, or aid from Nature, and intangibly restricted in establishing relationship with other souls; shackled by his own instincts and forced to submit to the limitations of dimly-divined Destiny;—the Seeker abandons the search for Spiritual Life, and falls into hopeless apathy.

BOOK IV.—ATTAINING.

I.—A SONG OF THE VOICE.

Like two famishing after shipwreck, the Seeker and his Soul are scarcely conscious of rescue. Yet a Presence is felt,—a Voice heard,—which proclaims itself their friend, born in man, the pioneer of the unconscious soul to earth, and the Associate of Nature.

The Voice is most distinct in denying that he is Soul or Instinct. Nor is he Conscience: for Conscience is the result of action, and requires the presence or influence of wrong.

After the manner of friendship, the VOICE is a medium of intercourse between the Soul,—to whom he is akin, and his own Associate,—Universal Nature.

II.—A SONG OF FINDING.

The Voice emphasises the value of the teaching of Nature*

* Answering the questions asked in the *Song of the Seeker* :

QUESTIONS.	ANSWERS.
I.—i, When ? ii, How ? iii, Why ? and iv, To whom	I.—i, First in childhood. ii, By means of our inner or spiritual life. iii, As to the kinsman of her Associate. iv, To all equally.
II.—Why do not all hear her ? or hearing, fail to com- prehend ?	II.—Because their want of sympathy or perception, and neglect of facilities for friend- ship, have chilled her fuller con- fidences.
III.—What does she teach ?	III.—Those know her who love her ; and to those who know her she reveals " <i>the secret of her kinship with the sky.</i> "

and reminds the Seeker that, as every part of Nature has its use, so Universal Nature must also fulfil some end, being herself but means towards the Infinite. Thus, in accompanying her, we receive fresh revelations from divine heights.

III.—A SONG OF RECEIVING.

So the Seeker learns that there *is* a link between the Spirit of God, the Unity of Nature, and the Soul of man. Addressing him with whom is found this knowledge of the triple relationship, the Seeker in turn declares that the VOICE is *greater* and *less* than he seems.

CLAIM OF THE VOICE.

I. (In *the Song of the Voice*):—Merely to be *the Associate of Nature, and the cicerone of the Soul.*

II. (In *the Song of Finding*) *the Voice* as sprung from the Infinite of God and the Finite of man, *claimed the innate power of spirit to know spiritual life.*

RECOGNITION BY THE SEEKER.

I. *Greater*, in that the Seeker recognises that the VOICE is a manifestation of the UNIVERSAL SPIRIT, which is to the Soul of Man what Universal Nature is to the earth.

II. *Less*, in so much as though it is indeed sometimes a part of God yet it is not infinite, but controlled by the Supreme, and unable to pass from its appointed orbit.

Again, with regard to man, it is only influential,—i, when he strives to hear; ii, when he has capacity to penetrate the symbol of revelation; iii, when he has courage to obey.

If these conditions be fulfilled, *then* also it is lustre from the Eternal Light, *such, indeed, as was shed in Transfiguration upon the PERFECT MAN.*

The song concludes by affirming that:—The feet which follow this Spirit as it moves onward through the domain of Nature will even unconsciously catch and carry with them the divine seed of plenty.

IV.—A SONG OF ASPIRATION.

The Seeker rejoices in this new personal perception of the living Spirit which moves in and with Nature, to whom his own soul is knit by love and instinct. More than ever enraptured by its manifestations, with reverent pleading he entreats it to appease his longings for light, and to be his comrade and guide until the day break.

V.—A SONG OF SINGING (The Psalm of Nature).

This, then, the Message heard in the Cathedral of Nature (see "Song of Pines") :

"Whereof these Songs—remembered from her lays."

BOOK V.—FULFILLING.

I.—A SONG OF INTERLUDE.

Returning across the lake, the rhythm of the oars suggests a lyric of effort.

II.—A SONG OF MY HEART AND I.

Looking upward, he sees the cloud-veiled summits of the distant Alps. Life and Death are full of seeming contradictions, and nearest the Light the altitude stands oftentimes darkened and lone.

III.—A SONG OF SACRIFICE.

In which is enjoined the necessity of self-abnegation.

IV.—A SONG OF EVENTIDE.

Rest comes at Eve. Bells are heard chiming across the lake. The sun sets : moon and stars appear : the nightingale wakes : and once more in the shadow there is song.

V.—A SONG OF BELLAGIO.

Imagining himself for the moment in other lands, the singer visions how he would recall the exquisite loveliness of the scene. If *Then* he should seek the fairest earthly Paradise, to Como would he return, with its snowy Alps, blue skies, and verdant shores ; and to Cadenabbia, his place of rest. In his dream he would lament that earth could no further enhance such beauty : whereon, in guise of a dove needing shelter, LOVE descends, ennobling life, and inspiring a purer unselfishness of man's spirit ; his dream accounts this vision of happiness complete.

VI.—A SONG OF FAREWELL.

“ These, musing on, O Friend ! remember me :
If not else blest, thrice fortunate in this ;
If I be linked with memories dear to thee
Of heights, sky-crowned, and depths, whose radiancy
In glassing Heaven images its bliss.”

He bids farewell to scenes wherein he found happiness and rest.



BOOK I.—RESTING.

.

A SONG OF COMO.*

I.

Say, when thou cleavest the dissevering sea,
And Gaul faints in the horizon, and the shore
Of Albion gleams in welcoming for thee,
Wilt thou have musings in thine heart for me,
And the sweet lake we twain have glided o'er?

II.

Bright shone the sun the morning that we met ;
And calm the sky which rimmed Milano's towers ;
And all the wearyings of life and fret,
Fevered in hope or frenzied in regret,
Were lost within a maze of golden hours :

* Note A.

III.

And soft the shadowed stillness in the fane
That overlooks the city's length of days,
And rich the light which struggling through the stain
Of azure, gold, and crimson-tinted pane,
Flooded the pave with rivulets of rays !

IV.

Let memory turn to these—if not to me !
To sunny Como's rhythmical outpour
That, brightly shadowless and sorrow-free,
Buries its pain in depths of melody,
And rolls the requiem on from shore to shore :

V.

To Cadenabbia, which the Soul of Rest,
World-worn and weary, fashioned with delight
And hid, as happy birds conceal their nest,
Mid bower and glade beside the water's breast,
And hills that shield the secret of her flight.

VI.

Let summer winds remind thee in their sigh
Of Alps snow-crowned, and rills that downward
break
Loosed like a silver hawser from on high
To link the tide's blue with the azure sky,
And moor Heaven like a shallop on the lake :

VII.

Of unmolested mornings on the deep ;
When, emulous for her awaiting brood,
The eagle leaves her solitary steep
And, circling downward, swooping in her sweep,
Bears to her young their life-expiring food :

VIII.

Or, from his eyrie fastness on the height,
The sudden shadow of the treacherous hawk
Scares back the truant song-bird—whose keen flight
Scatters the may in flower-flake, pure and white
As driven snow, on mossy knoll and walk :

IX.

Of water quivering with the weight of sky

That slumbers on its breast ; of suns that scan
Earth's loveliness, and feast a radiant eye

On glassy deeps and massy steeps, so high

They seem the columns which support heaven's
span :

X.

Of sweet Bellagio across the tide,

Pale 'neath the passion of the noonday-ray,
That wooed us over to her green hill-side ;

Up stairway streets bright-tinted with the pride

Of the town's mart of silken fabrics gay :

XI.

Or, through the little street that rims the shore,

'Neath archways which invite us into shade ;
Whence vistas, framed in granite round and o'er,
Content the eye, until their serried store

Makes an art-gallery of the dim arcade :

XII.

Of pines that chaplet Serbelloni's brow,
And crown her guardian of each sister-lake ;
Lecco—where oft we sped the pliant prow :
And Como—where I linger lonely now .—
Yet more beloved and cherished for thy sake.



A SONG OF SERBELLONI.

I.

Sweet Serbelloni ! throned upon the shore,
Estranged and all but severed from the land !
As some lone alchemist, thine eyes explore
The treasures of Nature's boundless store,
Yielded ungrudgingly to thy demand.

II.

Beneath thy gaze the ceaseless ripples glide,
And evermore the snowy summits pay
Involuntary tribute to the tide,
Now shallowed by the shade, now amplified
By sunny summer's influencing ray.

III.

And all things seem as they have ever been ;
Th' impending year approaches as the past,
And one bleak winter leaves as bare a scene
For Spring, with the same sympathetic mien,
To vivify, as that which left thee last :

IV.

The soul that passes from thy wistful gaze
Appears to thee as myriads that have crept
Into the chill unreverencing haze ;
And yet o'er the undifferencing days
The pinions of relentless change have swept.

V.

Thou seest no more the fabled deities
That erst inspired the stately Latin race ;—
Jove, Hebe, Ceres, dear to scenes as these,—
Calliope, whose lyric melodies
Would oft restrain swift Dian from the chase :

VI.

For them rich tapestries of green were fraught
With pine and palm, with olive, bay, and broom ;
And quaint design of daisies interwrought ;
And bloom of banksia-roses backward caught
In cypress, as stars mesht in a cloud's gloom.

VII.

Here Pan beguiled the solitude with song ;
Till, yonder, on the precipice's rim,
The serried trees that clamber in a throng
Bend downward, and their shadows steal along
Like gnomes of night to lie in wait for him.

VIII.

And where the nymphs consort in midnight dance
The bare brown space attests the nimble feet
And pliant limbs that, racing dawn's advance,
Heed not the moon's admonitory glance
In the pursuit of love and joyance sweet.

IX.

Secure within the unmolested night

The glow-worm, emulous of heaven's gleam afar,
Fulfil its lowly ministry of light ;
And fireflies, in their tremulous delight,
Falter as sparks wind-fluttered from a star !

X.

Here apt Apollo found that earth was fair,

And dreamt new music for the deathless choirs,
Melodious fantasies of soul and air,
Whereby he climbed, as 'twere by step and stair,
And rungs of ladders, tuned as strings of lyres.

XI.

Nor is the spirit of his music lost,—

The sense of song floats downward from Time's
flight ;
As, when the autumn chills the year with frost,
The scent of summer, like a feather tost
From her spent pinions, flutters o'er the night.

XII.

These paths precipitous above the deep

The Great have trod :—here Pliny oft would feed
His storied mind, viewing beneath the steep
His natal shore, or lingering there, would reap
Records for unborn centuries to read.

XIII.

Here, too, has disappeared in mellow sound

The echoed step of Virgil passing hence,—
Music which soared above yon Alpine bound,
And after ebbing onward the world round
Floods back in melodised mellifluence :

XIV.

Here loved he Nature, and within her home

Timing his breath to that which thrilled her
breast,

His lyre resounded in the halls of Rome,
And ceased not echoing when by the foam
Of caseful Napoli he sank to rest.

XV.

Here, too, successor to that innate love,
The later bard that sang sweet Windermere
Unloosed his muse that, like his favorite dove,*
Soared for interpretations from above
Of thought which Nature cloistered in her seer.

XVI.

The soul of greatness cannot disappear,
'Tis but the lesser intellects are lost :
The poets speak athwart the ebbing year ;
As songs across the tide serenely clear
They charm us onward over waves uncrossed !

XVII.

Here in this solitude I feel the power—
The noiseless strength of spirit-sympathy :
O little seed, that sometime shall be flower,
O little tendril, clinging to Song's bower,
Ye shall not droop for negligence of me !

* "I heard a stock-dove sing or say
His homely tale this very day
Of serious faith and inward glee ;
That was the song—the song for me."—*Wordsworth*.

XVIII.

For *one* chill touch irreparably destroys
The perfect symphony ! *One* soulless hand
Will mar the myriad tones the lute employs ;
One voice will jar a thousand vocal joys,
And break the spell none other could withstand !

XIX.

What good there is we suffer not to sleep—
Let evil slumber, let all good awake !
For who shall lead us onward o'er the deep,
If they that KNOW are suffered not to keep
Immortal watches by the waves we break ?



A SONG OF TWO CADENABBIAS.*

I.

A Song of double unity in one :

A Song of subtle singleness in twain :

A Song of similarity begun

In diverse difference—as from the sun

Shadow and light which jointly rise and reign.

II.

A Song of Cadenabbias, sole and twain ;—

One in the mirror of yon radiant realm,

The other on the margin of its strain,

Watching the days glide through the skies' domain

On wheels of joy, as water from life's helm.

* Note B.

III.

O Dual-unity ! O Unit-twin !

'Twixt sound of silence and resoundless sighs,
Thou standest where the confine-skies begin,
Unsummoned thence,—as'twere that men might win
A gleam of happy heaven in thine eyes !

IV.

O step, time-keeping to that sister's feet,
From whose calm tread nor dust nor jar is
riven !

O beating breath, that thrills her breathless beat !
O sweet, re-echoed by a soundless sweet,
Thou on the earth, she on the tides of heaven !

V.

O joyous soul, that hast for similar
One in whose smile immortal lustre beams ;
Whose brow is coroneted star by star ;
Whose zone is bound and belted bar on bar
With lunar rays gemmed by a planet's gleams !

VI.

O happy soul ! that hast before thine eyes
The mirrored consummation of thy hopes :
Life's distant bourne in beauty of fair skies,
Wherein thy severed self awaits thy rise—
Impatient on imperishable slopes !

VII.

O blest duplicity of single heart !
O similar dissimilar employ,
Part of thee throned within the light, and part
Sunk in the shadow—as thou oft-times art,
With cloud between thee and thy kindred joy !

VIII.

Yet, gentle ONE, that still art TWAIN in one,
Smile on, that knowest o'er the darkness lies
A golden glory centred in the sun !
Upraise thy reverencing eyes, that shun
No shade sobeit first to see the skies !

A SONG OF REST.

I.

Sweet soul of Rest, in which my soul is merged,
As if its pulses in thy clasp were tamed,
And its life-current aimed as thine is urged
By calm contentment, rhythmically surged,—
Duplicate joy by mirroring tides proclaimed

II.

Still heart of Rest, to which mine thrills, sad-souled
For e'en as one that hath not of her own
Finds mingled pleasure and heart-pain to hold
Another's infant in her fond enfold,
So I, to view thy joys, to me unknown !

III.

Envious oft to hear them softly name

 Thee mother, benefactor, guardian, friend ;
Each one a part and partner of thy fame,
A lesser self of thee, a smaller same,
 Whom diverse destinies of use distend.

IV.

Such are the waves that revel on thy breast,
 The solitudes which murmur in thine ears
The longing loves inimical to rest,
And such the songster-birds whose vocal quest
 Invades the quiet confines of the spheres :

V.

Such are the buds which delicately grow,
 Flower of thine age, that, wearied with restraint,
Upraise mute hands to signal back the snow ;
Who, spell-bound by their roseate life and blow,
 Sits on the hills responsive to their plaint :

VI.

And such, the winds whose fondling fingers curled
Thy gentle love-locks ere they rose and ranged
From out thy clasp into the world-wide world, -
Whom clouds, sweet shallops of the sky, sail-furled,
Restore to thee indelibly unchanged.

VII.

To thee I come from distant scenes that jarred,
And in the jading fevered my soul's thrill,
And raised a tumult in my heart, ill-starred
For visions happy which oft soothe a bard
Wearied with chords cadenced beyond his skill.

VIII.

Ah ! who can measure the strong influence
Of loyal sympathy thou art to me ?
Or price the timely balm which salves the sense
Of failure weakness, shade, and dissonance,
My heart's disheartenment acquires in thee ?

IX.

To drain thine easeful medicine of mind,

To thee, sweet scenes, I come,—as long ago ;—
Whose taste is sweet of song-sweet, soul-enshrined,
Mingled with scent of bloom-sweet and spring-wind,
To thee I come, whose voice is soft and low ;

X.

Whose speech is chimed to my soul's quietude,
Whose words are timed to my heart's latent
thought ;
Whose calm surroundings deck the solitude
With nothing uncongenial to my mood,—
Lo ! *this* is love, and other love is nought !



A SONG OF NIGHT AND MEMORY.

I.

Crimson from Monte Crocione's crest

The ebbing life-blood of the day ran red,
When Night, that nurtures Memory at the breast,
Leaving her nursling, hastened on the quest
Of mantlings to enshroud the newly dead.

II.

Up tortuous footways stealthily she climbs

As one accustomed to the Alpine art :
Till, as San Giovanni's belfry chimes
Three couplets and a half of ringing rhymes,
Memory wakes, and, sobbing, thrills my heart.

* * * * *

III.

Alas, the Memory, that, waked in woe,
Breaks into wails and weariful outpour
Of tears, upon whose unimpeded flow
Drifts back the passion of a long-ago,
In frenzy flung from life's rock-fretted shore !

IV.

O lips that murmur in the eve anew !
O gaze depressed whereon life's shadows sit !
O lashes dim with grief's perpetual dew !
O flowerless hands which in the passing through
Catching the cypress-grove are stained by it !

V.

Then whisper I: "What wouldst thou?" and again:—
"Wherefore, O Sweet ! are these thy sad tears
wept ?
For lo ! as one that lists a desolate strain,
Is straightway strung to the same pitch of pain,
So my heart's chord by that heart-sigh is swept :

VI.

“O sorrowing Sweet! What wouldest thou?” I cry:—

“For thy heart’s wail awakens woe in mine,
And, roused by sorrow, sigh responds to sigh:
And, raising thee, thy tear bedews mine eye,
And, kissing thee, my cheek is moist with thine:

VII.

“And my heart thrills with every throb thine hast:

For all the fair lands that around me lie,
Are dusk with clouds uprising from the past,
And no beam pierces them, however cast
In strength of silvery starlight from the sky:

VIII.

“Sweet songs soon wane, but wailing notes abide,

And my heart echoes thy disconsolate grief:
As if regret within me woke and sighed;
As if a dead love from the black grave cried,
And I,—O God!—was nerveless in relief!”

IX.

Then NIGHT, returning, whispered: "Know not ye
This MEMORY is the child of sorrowing Love ;
Begot of passion, born of Constancy,
And in the shadow fed and nursed by me
'Neath the faint glimmer of pale stars above ?

X.

"And the sun's rising shadows its mute gaze :
As, at the dawn, the drooping shores of lakes
Conceive and bring forth humid wraiths of haze :
And melodies of recollected lays
Bring tears—as rain from clouds which sound
awakes :

XI.

"And its low laughter fails in languid pain,
As a sweet song that sinks in minor keys :
And all the unknown language of its strain
Is murmurously shadowed with refrain
Of sudden sobs, like surge of swooning seas :

XII.

“As if the dead joy it hath sometimes seen
Lives in the life by that dead life begot :
It,—as a wakeful spectre of the e’en
Choosing for anguish to molest the scene,
Where it was erewhile joyous,—haunts the spot.”

XIII.

Then I : “O fond Night ! whose caress is prest
Within the locks of love that languisheth,
And whose soft arms entwine grief’s riven breast,
Hast thou no cure to work this Memory rest ?” . .
Then—weeping—she: “Such know not I,—save
Death !”

* * * * *

XIV.

Out from the Tremezzina’s still lagoon,
The gentle breeze sweeps onward, sorrow-free,
And wakes the lake from its lethargic swoon
To list the strain which nightingales commune
In liquid cataracts of melody. . . .

A SONG OF CONTRAST.

I.

And thou art far and farther than my dreams,
Friend ! that wast sharer of this calm content !
Dim is the vista since the dawning beams
Were blotted out by cloaking clouds and seams
Of an incessant rain the morn you went.

II.

Wilt thou not dream of gentle Nature oft,
Shut in the city's ever songless sound ?
Lost to all sense of skies and white clouds soft
In smoke of furnace languishing aloft,
And murky mist uprising from the ground ?

III.

Tramp of dull feet upon the riven road ;
Crash of wild wheels, and clash of clanging steel ;
Labour that forces Life to bear its load,
Driving it onward with perpetual goad
And conquering—howsoe'er the spent brain reel ?

IV.

These, which untune the ear inured to song,
Shall jar the chords that Nature richly blent ;
Till, stifled by the surging of the throng,
The soul forgets its ancient rhythm erelong,
Fevered by fierce Ambition's discontent :

V.

Brain that is whetted 'gainst the grinding year
Grudges its edge to luxury of thought ;
Keen in the carving of a great career,
Or weaponed 'gainst the wolf of want whose fear
Stalks linked with ghosts of dismal death unsought.

VI.

Throughout the city, soiled palms everywhere,
And miry feet throughout the populous land ;
But the pale brow attests the pulse of care,
Of yearning hope and oftentimes despair
Which thrill the courage of the toil-stained hand.

VII.

The people cry ; and there is woe and want
Within the city's mansioned affluence :
Whilst putrid squalor totters to its haunt
Wealth flashes by ; or in a palace gaunt
Luxury rots the feeling from each sense :

VIII.

The people cry ; for there is want and woe
And hunger in the midst of wasted wealth ;
There's more of viand in one vapid show,
More substance in one banquet's overflow
Than would suffice to keep a herd in health :

IX.

And this is certainty, though some scarce know :

And some forget, that have been somewhen told :

And some, remembering, deem it must be so :

And some, remembering, feel a passing throe :

And some, remembering, physic want with gold:—

X.

Which last, however gracious, works no cure ;

The cities which accumulate most wealth

Not only,—in aggrandisement,—secure

The overplus, which leaves the poor more poor,

But taint their last sad capital of health.

XI.

Wherefore what use is medicine of gold ?

“The poor ye shall have alway,” as was said :

Frame any scheme which fancy can unfold,

It shall be ever as it was of old—

Want ceases not save only with its dead.

XII.

Ye may instruct, enfranchise, elevate

The mass as Law, Right, Charity, demand ;

Ye only shift the burden fraught by fate ;

Some must possess the places they vacate,—

“The poor shall never perish from the land !”

XIII.

Less little wealth than little intellect

Engenders poverty ; could we divide

All we possess, the abler would collect

The riches by the empty-headed wreckt,

Since fools and pelf are never long allied !

XIV.

The justness of demand adjusts supply ;

There is a balance in existing things

Which Time disturbs but cannot stultify ;

The very seraphs needs must serve on high,

And man is soothed by angel-ministerings.

XV.

The universal problem of distress
Is only solved by solacing its throe ;
There's more humanity in one caress,
More sympathy in one true hand's impress
Than all the parliaments of realms bestow !

XVI.

There is in toil an honest nobleness,
The greater since it is no prince's gift,
But rather in itself hath power to bless,
Cheer, soothe, inspirit, dignify, impress,
The princeliness which profits by its thrift.

XVII.

Less feeling *for* than feeling *with* each lot,
Wise statesmen energise broad sympathies ;
And learn—by the advantages begot
Of wealth and intellect and station—what
The million feel who are not born to these :

XVIII.

Thus by a comprehensive knowledge fired,
They light and spread the glowing influence
That warms another to an aim desired,—
For from one spark a thousand are inspired
And one soul's fervour makes a score intense ;

XIX.

And thine shall win thee record in the schools,
Thoughts, efforts, aims, and energies of man !
The crowd soon follows him that strongly rules :
The greater moulds the lesser into tools
With which to shape the purposes of Plan.

XX.

But for thy cost, the haunts of men demand
The heart which Nature fondly would beseech :
Yet haply I that clasp her friendly hand,
Loving her best in this bright southern land,
May grasp some lesson worthy of life's reach.*

* Note C.

NOTES TO BOOK I. IN APPENDIX.

A. COMO.

B. COUNTERPARTS.

C. CONTRAST : THE POETIC INTERPRETATION
OF NATURE.

BOOK II.—QUESTIONING.

A SONG OF PINES.

I.

There is a grove to which I ofttimes climb,—
 (Hung as a cloak above a verdant vale),
Whose swinging branches beat the measured time
Of many a reverie's unuttered rhyme,
 And lift to music e'en its deepest wail:

II.

A grove wherein such shadow seems to cling
 As though, perchance, the migratory night
In cruising hence from dawn's pursuing wing
Had cast an oar—snapped in the feathering—
 To float adown returning tides of light :

III.

A dusky grove, wherein is never gloom,
Only the cloistered atmosphere of Song ;
And such a sanctity as fills the room
Wherein sage counsels sift the seed of bloom
Which flowers in legislative light erelong.

IV.

Here have I dwelt unlonely, though alone :
Unseparate, though dissevered from my kind :
For there is voice in every varying tone
Of the grove's music answering to mine own,
And changeless concord of sweet heart and
mind.

V.

There was a time I knew not of the balm
That lay within that shelter of tall trees :
Methought 'twas gloomy when 'twas only calm,
Methought 'twas sighing when 'twas but the psalm,—
The happy psalm—of sylvan symphonies :

VI.

But, drawing nearer on a golden morn
Whose glitter was discordant to my gloom,
I said : Lo, better is the light foresworn
In shade than beams which, pointed as a thorn,
Pierce through the petals of my heart's shut
bloom !

VII.

For there *is* gloom that is not always grim,
Yea, there is shadow tempered of its shade ;
A cloud whose pinion hath an outer rim
Of golden downiness which is not dim—
Bright as a flower unfolded in arcade.

VIII.

Wherefore I entered, and the soul of me
Drank draughts of stillness, as from out a cup ;
And all the light, which first I vaguely see,
Pointed with unobtrusive radiancy,
And gently drew my vision on and up :

IX.

And I grew caseful—even as when blinds
 Darken the chamber of the sick until
The tremulous frame be strengthened for the winds
And fervid gleams which 'stablish healthier minds—
 And in the solace of the shadow, still :

X.

And as that sufferer in his shaded room—
 With conscious eyes beholding everything
That passes round him, presaging no gloom
From the hushed step, nor prescience of his doom
 From sighs and gusts of bated whispering,—

XI.

Lies still ; content from sleepless hour to hour
 Rather to speak in vision than in word,
Regaining effort by no use of power,
And gradually unfolding as a flower
 Those sweeter senses which are seen not heard :

XII.

So I ! . . . For thou to me, O grove wast this :—
To my distress—a cover of soft shade ;
To my depression—hushed sound, as a kiss
Sheltered in shadow : To my heart—the bliss
Of rest ; and to my spirit's plumage frayed

XIII.

And tempest-fluttered—strains which fondled o'er
And round its rufflement caressed away
And gathered into song the thrill it bore,
Till in me there was nothing but sweet store
Of cadence—easeful as a lover's lay :

XIV.

And long and late was I content to lie
Upon the threshold of a mightier song
Than fairest visions e'er could vivify—
Yielding of all I had, my heart's full sigh,
Wherefrom the throe of grief was lost ere long.

XV.

Then, entering closer, I was fain to sit
 Within the very aisles of shapely song :
Where the light fell as through a casement lit
With green pane of the leaf, and over it
 Azure of skies and white clouds in a throng :

XVI.

And here and there the crimson of sered leaves
 And ruddiness of cones that turn to red ;
Fringed with deep blackness as it were the eaves
Which cast a shadow swayed as the branch heaves
 Or as the sun moves downward to his bed :

XVII.

And odor of ripe cones beneath the sun
 Made incense, which the ministering boughs
Swung to and fro as censers one by one :
Whilst the breeze stole, as 'twere a sorrowing nun
 Up through secluded aisles and moaned her
 VOWS.

XVIII.

Here, long unanswering, I was e'en as they,
That silent seek the sacred edifice
To list the litanies that others pray,
And rise on anthems as they roll away,
And peradventure steal some share of bliss.



A SONG OF NATURE.

I.

In me—upon this unfrequented hill

Which overlooks calm Lecco—there arise
Thoughts that enquire of mountain, vale and rill
The hidden purpose which they each fulfil :
The sweet interpretation of their sighs ?

II.

Then to my plaint ere ever it was told

There rose responses in the whispering trees :—
“ *We are the Voice of Nature ! For behold !
Hers is a mission mighty, manifold
And multifarious through all centuries !*”

III.

Nature ! made beautiful without the aid,
Taint, teaching, touch, or ministry of man :
All that she hath no hand of his hath made ;
Wind, wood, and water, cavern and cascade,
In rich perfection of unpurposed plan !

IV.

The centuries glide on, her seasons glow,
Yet hath she substance for all human need :—
Blossom, that cheers us with its odorous blow ;
Sunlight, that warms the current of life's flow,
And fires the germ yet latent in the seed.

V.

The bees,—her deft handmaiden messengers,—
Uplift the flower's lid and perfume her breath ;
And all she hath, not only ministers
To her delight, but, symbolized, avers
The hidden mysteries of birth and death.

VI.

The joyous songbirds raise her solitude
From weariness of silence else too still ;
And, soaring skyward in rapt interlude
Of sunny hours, swoon downward,—soul-imbued
With sense of song sweeter than earth could
thrill :

VII.

Her swallows bring the summer to the spring
And point the period of the waning year ;
Warning her of revengeful winter's sting
By twittered choruses upon the wing ;
Or, skimming waveward, herald the cloud's tear:

VIII.

The imitative lake reflects her form
And, bound in her caresses, breathes its vows :
The very ringing roundels of the storm,
And the still sighs of southern breezes warm,
Are plagiarised from her Æolian boughs :

IX.

And with the morn her smile inspires the beams ;
And through the noon her influence fills the air ;
And in the evening her sweet presence seems
The glad precursor of angelic dreams
Our spirits rise and rapturously share :

X.

Nightly, as if the messenger of God,
She, following, soothes the stricken sun's
descent :
To her God is no Stranger—for her sod
Treasures the impress of the Feet that trod
Creative through chaotic firmament.

XI.

Thus, by unbroken commune with the skies
Her Soul is teacher to the soul of men ;
And never is she silent to the sighs
Which crave her inexhaustible supplies,
Nor wearied in well-doing anywhen.

XII.

Knowledge of books, save such as sing of her,
Or of the destiny of noble days,
Makes not a man so rich a minister
In touch with them that aim and them that err,
As Nature makes of him who loves her ways.

XIII.

Whence learn of her—since she, than all ye know
Lives truer to God's purpose ! Man, erst near,
Soon crumbled from the lofty to the low ;
But Nature even as created so
In rich progression fills her primal sphere :

XIV.

And lo ! her utmost being binds and blends
The link betwixt the Human and Divine :—
For with one hand she touches the world's ends,
And with the upraised other she defends
The very gate of heaven from man's design.

A SONG OF DAWN IN NATURE.

I.

If God descended to the earth, His Light
Would scarce seem brighter than the burst of Dawn,
When, radiant o'er Varenna's marble height,
It overwhelms the lowering mists of night
And spreads the gleaming banners of the morn :

II.

If God descended to the earth, the soul
Could scarce be more celestially uplift
Than is the world when all its clouds unroll
And vanish,—voiceless in the sun's control,—
And the warm breath of heaven quickens it :

III.

If God descended o'er the earth, the land
Would scarce seem nearer heaven than when the
Day
Creeps through the lintels of the gates that stand
Crimson, with beams of gold across them spanned,
And bound until GOD'S Hand unbar the way :

IV.

If Earth ascended Heavenward in its Night,
It were no heaven to be thus home-borne :
For our seared souls would be betrayed by blight
Of partial darkness and imperfect light,
And, swooning back, would cry :—" GOD ! give
us *Dawn !*"

V.

Wherefore, as first, the unbound brow of night ;
And then, the gradual gleam as of a gem ;
And then, Morn's coronal of lustre bright :
So must our souls be diademed with light,
Ere even Heaven itself were Heaven to them !

A SONG OF GOD IN NATURE.

I.

As in the offspring some similitude
Betrays the sire,—so oftentimes recur
In gentle Nature's ever-varying mood
Some tone, expression, teaching,—soul-imbued,—
Which speak of HIM Whose love created her :—

II.

Grandeur of joy that wakes the world to song ;
Glory of light which fills the vacant air ;
Grief of bowed shadow round the spent years'
wrong ;
Gloom of majestic thunder rolled along ;
Gleam of lit wrath that blasts and lays life bare :

III.

Sigh of the wind ere yet the pent clouds fall ;
Solace of song which wakens after rain ;
Surge of regret in the wave's broken call ;
Sheen of the sky that silvers the sun's pall ;
Sound of sweet rapture riven from life's pain :

IV.

Radiance of promise in the heaven-lit-bow ;
Rapture of hope flushed over the day's birth ;
Robe of white purity that falls in snow ;
Ripeness of autumn, gleaming with death-glow ;
Rescue of grain,—home-garnered from the earth !

V.

Earth's ripeness, gathered 'neath the reaper's blade,
Gleaned for glad granaries, rich in golden hue :
Where part abides, and part within the glade
Awaits the spring to summon it from shade,—
The resurrection of old life in new :

VI.

Nor is this truth beyond our reason's range,—
The risen life is no unwonted thing ;
Germs burst to growth by means of this death-
change ;
If the dead rose not it were passing strange,
Since even Nature rises with the spring !

VII.

A dance of death—the dead leaves twirl and race ;
The *Æons*, passing, blind our eyes with dust ;
Our Systems spread, as boughs that interlace
And lose themselves in undiscovered space,—
But Wisdom leans upon the arm of Trust !



A SONG OF MAN IN NATURE.

I.

And there are types of things invisible

In the seen glories of the wood and wave,
And troublous tides that, like our passions, swell
The surging breast with joys it dare not tell,
And hopes too sweet, too exquisite to crave:—

II.

The torrent—conscious of exalted birth,—

Has caught the spirit of a lofty strain,
And, leaping to enrich the heart of earth
Tells us :—True ministry hath room for mirth
However much fulfilled in paths of pain !

III.

And oftentimes its rapid feet will race

The golden moment's sun-inspired delight ;

But, as a boy untutored to the chase

Pales in the unpremeditated pace,

Its fretted limbs droop pallid in mid-flight :

IV.

Yet e'en the mists, which darken and depress

The distant goal its birth looked proudly o'er,

But add new volume to the eagerness

Which swells the swifter for each sun the less,

And floods the fuller for each cloud the more :

V.

So, ever earnest in its firm belief,

Hope triumphs most that is the more deprest ;

Its gladness gains a lustre from its grief :

And bliss, made sweeter as it seems more brief,

By every pang is worthier of the quest !

VI.

And sometimes hushed in still lagoons of ease,
It draws fresh inspiration from the sky,
The which 'twill harmonize in melodies
For lowly vales and solitary leas
And banks o'er which the plaintive willows sigh:

VII.

See how the willow watches o'er the stream,
Her unbound tresses curtaining his bed ;
Content to share Ambition's restless dream,
And, though dissevered, satisfied to seem
Part of the life from which her life is fed :

VIII.

Thus Life and Labour summon Love away,
And Love, responsively, enriches each :
The swallow flits with summer's dying ray,
But true hearts summer even mid decay,
And winter holds them sacred from his reach ;

IX.

There is a loftiness in love like this

That adds new fervour to the soul's belief :—

Love yields not only life's too finite bliss

But teaches us by similes to wis

If love be heaven,—earth's love is Heaven's fief.



A SONG OF NATURE IN MAN..

I.

Yea, NATURE'S teaching thrills the soul anew :

There is a meaning in her every mood ;
And glimpses of far Heaven glimmer through
Each rift that silvers the cloud's lowering hue
And gilds the land in bright solicitude :

II.

Whence falls fair light which loosens and unbinds

Our shadowed faith, with lustre as of God :
For HE uplifts the shadow from our minds,
Typed in the dawn, when earth, awakening, finds
His feet have swept night's tear-drops from the
sod !

III.

Teachings which elevate the thoughts of men :

For who consorts with holy Nature long
But from the world turns back to her again
For joyaunce more enduring,—yielded when
'Twere vain to seek the solace of the throng ?

IV.

The races which are fostered in her sphere

By her more simple influence blest
Are earth's nobility:—The mountaineer
Who braves the havoc of the frozen year ;
The huntsman calm amid his life's unrest ;

V.

The lonely fisherman that on his task,

Mute as the dead, glides on from weir to weir ;
And he who barbs the monsters as they bask,
Or lures them in the midnight from the mask
Of gloomy deeps with torchlight 'neath the spear ;

VI.

And he that tends the innocence of flowers ;
 And such as climb the breaker's eminence ;
And they that guard the flock through midnight
 hours,
Learned in the sky, prophetic of its showers,
 Deterred not by the winter's violence ;

VII.

And he that sings the beauty of fair climes,
 For love of Nature callous to the throng,
And in rapt vigil recompensed at times
If e'en one echo of her accent chimes
 Within the chords love-woven into song !



A SONG OF TRINITY IN NATURE.*

I.

I hold GOD First ; and, ranging Thence, I brook
No neighbouring second other than His Word
Whereof is Nature—for the Christ oft took
From her a parable as from a book ;
And Man and the immortal soul is third.

II.

And as the lesser emulates the great
So Nature (as I sang) looks up to God
To find in Him a law to imitate ;
But not to man—for sooth ! 'twere neath her state
To stoop from skies to image dust and sod.

* See Appendix, Note D.

III.

Yet, though unimitative of his mind,

She, like Messiah, sometimes takes on her
Man's immaterial instincts—thus to find
A temporal equalness with human-kind
The better to become man's minister.

IV.

For he that teaches hath a stronger hold
On them in pupilage in that he shows
That he the same is tempted, but controlled
By the conclusion which his creeds unfold ;—
Himself the instance of the truth he knows :

V.

Thus, gentle Nature ! lead me into Light :
For thou hast drooped in shadow of despair
And swift reaction, when with darkened sight
We blindly grope along the vacant night
And clutch at phantoms in the empty air :

VI.

Thou too hast felt the pallor of the noon
Sicken in fever of the flushing eve ;
Hast known the languor of the midnight swoon,
And the white chill which numbs the dying moon,
And palls—which spindles of the sunrise weave :

VII.

Hast seen thy heart unlevelled in an hour ;
And the bright disc uprooted from life's day ;
The petals reft and riven from the flower ;
The branches bruised and broken in the bower,
And the leaves scattered mid the sodden hay :

VIII.

Hast crushed thy heart with an unnamed regret
The accustomed name none mention in thy walls :
Where once 'twas as a word in music set
That sped melodiously from fret to fret
The fond familiar roaming through thy halls.

IX.

(O linger not to mark the clouds steal by !

There's little wisdom in all knowledge here !

Stay not to watch the flickering planets die ;—

The heart stands still that numbers its own sigh

And the eyes chill that count the brimming tear !)

X.

My spirit looketh e'en as thine for Light ;

Dispel the mists surrounding me and thee !

The pulses slacken in the vapoury night,

And doubt lies on my being like a blight

And tarnishes immortal trust in me.

XI

Lead me to Light ! for thou canst sympathise

With the soul's hunger and incessant strain

Of wending sunward with unshaded eyes ;

Lead me ! for thou art elder, and more wise

Perchance in pathways devious from life's pain.

XII.

Lead me to Light !—for oft-times I despond :
Lend me thine arm—I stumble in the gloom.
(Christ! when mine hour hath come O be Thou fond
To this poor faith that visions Thee beyond
The shade of life's indissoluble doom !)

XIII.

Lead me O Friend ! for upward are the stars
That seraphs trim to pioneer our eyes
Above the cloud-wraith's intersected bars,
Which, swinging, break the thunderbolt that jars
The voiceless calm of visionary skies.

XIV.

Lead me to Light ! howbeit through the shade,
O thou that knowest of the Stygian shore !
Take thou mine hand that I no more dismayed
May walk where 'bove the stars God's light is laid
Like beams of gold across a jewelled floor.

XV.

Lead me as one that seest the sun's deathbed :
Shout! as a fiery herald whose report
Is :—"Victory! Victory! Death and Shame are dead !
Weariness vanquished ! Dissolution fled !
And God the Victor in Life's vassal fort !"

XVI.

Lead me to God ! for thou art meaningless
Except thou type the larger Wisdom here ;
Enfold my soul in thy great soul's caress
Till in thy lofty all my lowliness
Immerged commingles with God's mightiersphere.

XVII.

Lead me to God ! for there all light is sweet ;
Lead me, O love ! that mine awakened eyes
May daily view more surely, more complete,
His Wisdom lead the knowledge of Life's feet ;—
For knowledge soothes, but Wisdom satisfies.

A SONG OF REVOLUTION IN NATURE.

I.

O isle of crimson in a sea of cloud
Flying a ruddy pennon of distress !
Whilst o'er the Alp-tops, ship-like in a shroud
Of hurricane shadow, rise the thunders loud—
Like cannon from an ironclad in stress :

II.

O little isle of crimson in a sea
Of night and tempest-tide of tears ! O sweet,
Compass thy heart with courage fearlessly,
For on the heavens there is no light but thee
Save in the west—sparks from the sun's swift feet.

III.

O glimmering darkness creeping from the east,
Like an incoming tide of billows black
Whose waves have lashed themselves into a yeast
Of fire-fringed passion, tarry thou at least
Till the belated sun escape the wrack :

IV.

Tarry at least until the day is done,
For it was bright throughout a golden course ;
Blight not a race so lustrelessly run ;
Lash not the feet of the reproachless sun
With thy mad mutinous billows, passion-hoarse :

V.

Thou hast the night, the unpresumptuous night,
On whom to wreak thy desolating will ;
Wherein thy waves shall riot with the light
Of tremulous stars transfixed with pale affright,
And the aged moon, outwitted by thy skill.

VI.

Thou heedest not, but tramplest on his track,
Mad with the frenzy of an aimless ire ;
Now, by thy bolt his corse lies charred and black !
Not all thy gleams can ever summon back
Light to that orb which closed in glittering fire !

VII.

My God ! how drear ! . . . The shepherd's lowly
glow
Flickers in darkness as expiring death !
Deeper and swifter, Storm ! thy billows flow :
Woe on the hills and in the valleys woe !
And through my heart the tumult of thy breath !

* * * * *

VIII.

Lo, when light comes shall it in truth be Light !
After the rainfall rusts the lightning's gleam,
After the javelins of the sunrise smite
The unresisting bosom of the night,
After the darkness—Waking? Sleep? or Dream?

IX.

Within a star this shuddering counsel lies ;—

“An ample wind shall kiss the feet of God ;
Electric rain shall stream from Heaven’s eyes ;
Then shall the seed of Revolution rise

In flower of Freedom thro’ the loosened sod !”



BOOK III.—SEARCHING.

A SONG OF THE SEEKER.

I.

I cannot tell when first 'twas mine to find
Life's fair delight in land and sky and sea ;
I know not when mine eye to them was blind,
Nor when the unconscious mirror of the mind
Impressed and centred Nature's life in me :

II.

I know not when, but deem it must be long
Since first my soul drew fulness in the breath
Of world-wide winds, and solace from the song
Of birds, and reveries from the innocent throng
Of brooding flowers, for now I know 'twere death

III.

To be without the sweet companionship

Of things men deem inanimate ! . . . I know
Of the soul's song escaped with silent lip ;
I know of sweetness which no bee would sip,
And bloom that winters where no weed could
blow :

IV.

I know of voices wherein all my soul

Finds full expression :—forests bound and bent
In groaned dejection 'neath the thunder's roll ;
Of billows bursting from the wind's control
In petulant dissonance of discontent :

V.

I know of some great Soul which when it speaks

The little soul of me thrills through and through,
Even as when a great wind nears the creeks
The tiny ripples, curved in silver streaks,
Lean up to list the lips they may not view :

VI.

I know the silence of the crimson west
When stillness lives betrayed by breaths of sound ;
When not a note, save of the bower-glade's best
And most harmonious, dare disturb the rest
And sleep of night which twilight curtains round :

VII.

And of the murmurous music of bound brooks—
Congenial when the half-imprisoned soul
Stealthily wanders from distraining nooks,
And, in the open, mirrors the fair looks
Of stars that clamber through the clouds' control :

VIII.

I know of things whereof 'twere hard to tell
The method and the meaning of their balm,
Save that they melodise me with a spell
And by a magic sympathy repel
My grosser moods from their euphonious calm !

IX.

But how or when I know not : nor can guess ;
Nor should I question what my heart acquires
Except that gradually less and less
I can unto the casual crowd confess
This inner life which Nature's love inspires :

X.

For all her mystic beauty, which to me
Symbols some crowning loveliness of creed,
Some smile at, saying :—" Eyes are sharp that see
In symbols things that are not nor shall be,—
Fools follow myths rather than none should lead!"

XI.

For men deface,—but build not when destroyed :
They take oursomething and they leave us nought:
(Forgetting Nature hath no room for void,
And e'en the savage by some hope is buoyed
Be it a stone or sun in silver wrought :)

XII.

To whom I say :—" The Negative demeans
The brain created for the Positive :
Belief in Nothing staggers since it leans
On Nothing, but belief in Something screens
Its weakness on the breast that bade it live."

XIII.

And some,—to whom unguardedly I go,—
Who cry :—" We know her not ; and verily
If she were worth the knowing *We* should know !" *!*
Turn all my heart back on my heart's o'erflow,
Till my tears surge as an imprisoned sea.

XIV.

And some with the Hellenic aim confest
Find a voluptuous rapture in the brow
The shapely features, and the snowy breast
Of Nature, and essay no further quest
Than Beauty as a god : to whom they bow

XV.

And in her groves make sacrifice of Song
And the sweet firstlings of ambrosial flowers :
Whereto they say the south-wind speeds along
With odours aromatic, incense strong
As aught that o'er the shrined Madonna towers :

XVI.

And when these priests (for e'en the acolytes
Are poets in this Beauty-Ministry)
For weariness descend the vocal heights,
The very song-birds raised the strain in flights
More lofty than the longing eye can see :

XVII.

And others, and they are by no means few,
Ignore her teaching, saying :—" Sooth ! we see
Nothing beneath the broad expanse we view !"
(And place her as a servant in the pew
Of worship's universal ministry :)

XVIII.

“She tends,” they say, “with pasturage and drink
Our peaceful flocks that summer 'neath her care
She is the husbandman that by the brink
Of rivers raises roofs of leaves to link
Sequestered shade from the sun's vacant stare :

XIX.

“She is but as a menial in the halls
Of man—a servitor whose ceaseless lot
Is to be servile to incessant calls
And upright 'neath intolerable thralls
And, at the banquet of the soul, forgot.

XX.

“Of her and of her Poesie high-wrought
We have no need—sound in an empty shell ;
We, in supremacy of loftier thought,
Can well afford to leave her strains unsought ;
That hold good prose can image life as well.”

XXI.

And with a calm complacency apprise
The ancient high-born lineage of Song
As less and secondary to the rise
Of mushroom growths of intellect which buys
Its day of gold, and dies forgot ere long.

XXII.

Lo ! these be they that lose a great delight !
And though perchance intent on ampler things
It yet shall be, that, ere they reach God's height,
Their souls will *have* to learn how glad—how bright—
This self-same sense of Song on golden strings.

XXIII.

To whom I say :—"O for a hand to sweep
The pure Song-essence from a thousand strings
That all the electric Soul of Song might leap
Into melodious flash of meaning deep
And fire the heart with Nature's ministerings !"

XXIV.

To whom I say :—" O that all eyes would see
The beauties which ten thousand orbs forswear !
O for a light to burst the gloom, and free
The vapour of all spirit-apathy !
O for perpetual freshness in the air !"

XXV.

To whom I say :—" Lo ! it is sweet in sooth
To know full surely that she is full sweet :
And that the everything I wist of truth
And gracious gentleness of good in youth
Was learnt of her,—an infant at her feet !

XXVI.

" But where we met, or whether kith or kin
In bond of blood, as now in spirit's spell,
I know not :—Nay, nor if her heart did win
My heart, or that my spirit entered in
At her heart's casement . . . Nay . . I cannot tell !

XXVII.

But to the soul by which my heart is fired,—
The soul that tendeth me and ministers,
I sighed :—"Come ! let us seek the link desired,
The spot and circumstances which conspired
To merge my life's vitality in hers.

XXVIII.

"For e'en as twain that journey through the day,
Wisting a sudden ravishment of sound,
Will stand awhile, then straight retrace their way
To find the fountain of that liquid lay,
So would we seek Life's source of joy unfound.

XXIX.

"Ah me ! God knows how surely save for fate
I too had lost what thousand others miss :
Wherefore, I prithee, let us estimate
Why some are glad, and some are desolate ?
Why some are given and some denied her bliss ?

XXX.

“Thus seeking, peradventure we shall find

Whether she speaks save only where she choose?

Or, whether, if appealing to each mind,

She be invisible? or else men blind

That, losing, know not even what they lose?”



A SONG OF THE SINGER.

I.

Then did we launch upon the wave and glide
Down my life's wake —by secrecies of shade
And open interludes of summer-tide,
By tributary rills, by green hill-side
And shelving shores that slumber in arcade.

II.

And much, long-lost upon the stream of time,
In part, reviewed I rescue for mine own :
As one from scarce a cadence of a chime
Re-echoes as of old the perfect rhyme,
And finds a memory in every tone :

III.

This, I remember : yonder, well I know :

And there, lo ! such and such a thing befell :
And here, O gladness ! happy years ago
I anchored from the wide world's onward flow
And rested me with love a joyous spell !

IV.

Rested, as one whom labour leads to rest,

Yet, ere repose be possible, must find
The nook familiar that awaits his quest ;—
For *twain* must yearn ere ever *one* is blest,
But, in that blessing, *twain* are intertwined !

V.

It well may be that God, to educate

The soul for its bright heritage above,
Commissions some from the celestial state
To soothe, console, ennoble, elevate

Our life's probation,—and their name is LOVE !

VI.

And some enrich us with a gift more prized,
And some more beautiful, and some more good :
But mine was sweetest,—the fond idolised
Ideal of my heart's devotion,—guised
As woman in all perfect womanhood !

VII.

Whom may God love !—since hers was love from
God :
Whose heart God soothe !—that gave hers
sympathy :
Whose feet God guide !—as her step on the sod,
Loosening the earth on which she lightly trod,
Unbound the gerin and bade it flower for me.

VIII.

Yea, it is sweet to let the world glide by,
As one unconscious of its fevered thrill ;
Timing existence only to love's sigh,
And finding life's fair sunlight in the eye
That sparkles back the joys our own instill :

IX.

How bright the scenes delight of love makes fair !

How populous e'en the stilly solitude

When the ideal of the heart is there !

How calm the hour congenial spirits share !

When even Time flits—fearing to intrude !

X.

Rapt eventides, borne nightward on the wing

Of calm content ! nights, that in slumber wait

Within the shadow for the opening

Of heaven's portals ! dawns, which downward bring

The earliest echoes from the unbarred gate !

XI.

When the glad lark, heaven's acolyte of song,

Soars for the sunbeam that awakens me,

What time the pattering of the dew falls strong

From bower and bract orouse the songster-throng,—

Revel of all notes singable set free !

XII.

And here was storm ; and yonder, rain and heat
 Borne to the water on the swallow's wings ;
Where, from the sun, I lingered in retreat,
As oft within the shadow of the sweet
 We lose the light of more ennobling things :

XIII.

For now, Ambition, like a fitful breeze
 Would thrill th' accustomed quiet of my heart,
And rouse my life from its inglorious ease
To vision ampler aims and energies
 Which some day I might shape or share in part :

XIV.

Dream of the yonder, which like dawning light
 Creeps round the snowy summit of the soul,
And silently descending on the night,
Severing the shadow with a sickle bright,
 Prepares the path where cars of progress roll.

XV.

For the soul's shadowland incessant yearns
For light ; and, when night's interluding sleep
Soars from the rested eyelid, it upturns
An anxious gaze unto the morn, and learns
How life were death savesunlight crown the steep :

XVI.

The bud would droop ! the summer leaf decay !
The fountains in their tremulous pallor freeze !
In baffled search for dawn's inspiring ray
The birds would fret their song-pent souls away,
And Death would be man's friend—sole friend
he sees !

XVII.

This, save for light ! . . "Wherefore, O Soul !" I say :—
"Small marvel that we sleep away the night,
Small marvel that Heaven's self inspires dismay,
Since shade of Death enshrouds the gate of Day :
Or that our longing litanies crave for light !"

XVIII.

And now, we chance on shallows by the brim
And my Soul crieth :—" Dost thou recollect
How the fiend led and we nigh followed him?"
For many a reef lay sunken neath the rim
And on the shore the bones of thousands wreckt.

XIX.

And here, bleak trees, struggling in wilderness,
Besought no boon save only barren life :
Whence a great longing rose in me to bless
The human heart of hunger and distress,
And fill the hands upraised in famished strife.

XX.

And thus, an ampler purpose in me stirred,
And first I sang, as one that fain must thrill :
The unmelodious pipings of a bird,—
A fledgling that, while wistful to be heard,
If one *should* list grows tremulously still.

XXI.

For in me surged a sudden fount of song
Which, welling, brake the surface-calm of speech,
And in a current carried it along,
And, leaping onward into rivulets strong,
Rushed toward the rhythm which racing rivers
reach.

XXII.

And the Soul in me said :—" The rich have ears
For sweet refrain, ballad and song sublime,
And quick pulsation for unreal tears :
But, for *thy* Song, O sing the surge of years
Which beats upon the barren shore of Time !

XXIII.

" That, peradventure, some that list shall learn
There is in life a pathos yet more sweet
Than rhyme from imagery can ever turn ;
And in the struggle of pure souls that yearn
A nobler nerve than fires the knightly feat."

XXIV.

But, oft alas ! as waters whelmed in shade,
My heart grew chill and sang no more aloud,
Despairing of the minstrelsy it made :—
For even hope, that heavenward winged for aid,
Soared not beyond the shelter of a cloud.

XXV.

Till here, this self-same stream beneath our prow
Unrolled a picture to my soul grief-riven,
Wherein were azure floods of sky, and now
Islands of cloud white-cliffed, and said :—" See how
Earth's depths of gloom may raise thy heart to
Heaven !"

XXVI.

Whereof we spake not, but my Soul and I
Made record as we breasted the year's wake
Of all the vistas which we glided by,
That we at last might each to each supply
Links for the chain 'twas labour's love to make.

A SONG OF FAILURE.

I.

Discouraged and nigh daunted, lo ! we strand
At the wave's utmost limits, even where
Life's stream, a tiny rill, ascends the land :
So that our shallop, foundered on the sand,
Needs must abide in restless anchorage there.

II.

Then to my Soul I looked and she on me,
And I was silent and she spake in sighs,
As each from each discerned intuitively
Here was the end save only infancy,
And the unknowable which in it lies :

III.

For who can scale the ladder of young days
To break away the darkness from the height
Where gleams the secret disc of primal rays?
Or from high Heaven wrench away the haze
Which blots our recollection from the light?

IV.

Then said my Soul :—" Here thou and I first met
In actual converse and concurrent speech :
But yonder as a black gulf round us set
The young beginnings of existence fret
The high research we twain essayed to reach."

V.

Whercon I, almost weeping, said :—" God knows
That for advantage of the human soul
I sought to probe this question to the close :
Finding the Whence of individual throes,
And if they ever throbbed in our control :

VI.

“ And did conspire with Time’s long course to cope ;
Deeming that somewhere on the stream of life
The Quest should loom, and round each shelving
slopes
Exclaimed :—Lo ! peradventure here, we hope,
Lies the long-sought with mutinous oars in
strife !—

VII.

“ And now our scanty knowledge kens no more
Than that my soul and I emerged as one
From out the bourn of some forgotten shore,
And that we lived together, making store
Of such frail wisdom as lies ’neath the sun :

VIII.

“ For knowledge runs in cycles as the hare
Starting from self, it back to self returns :
And howsoe’er the course be fleet and fair
There comes a time when darkly we’re aware
His very instincts shackle him that learns !

IX.

“ Still, e'en one step in furtherance of the sage,
We say, we know that knowledge only shews
That we know nothing, yet 'twas page by page
Of this know-nothing knowledge, age on age,
That proves to man the little that he knows :

X.

“ And proving little, since we could not prove ;
And seeing less, in that we cannot see ;
And, being bounden in a narrow groove
Which only deeper depths of Death remove,
We grope within Life's shadow, crying :—‘ We

XI.

“ ‘ See nothing definitely, though we learn and learn ;
And knowledge ends in vagueness of intent,
And for the wage of labour that we earn
Only the smouldering of the flame we burn ;
And dazing half-light of bewilderment !”

XII.

“ This then, the End of all we would attain,
This, the completion of an ample dream ;—
A little breath that feeds a mighty strain,
A mighty heart that thrills a little gain,
And things intangible within Hope’s gleam !”



A SONG OF LETHARGY.

I.

O dim East ! how immeasurably deep
With an illimitable loneliness
Thy shining shadows round our spirits creep :
Wherefrom light dies as from a wave's ebb-sweep,
Surged into lethargy of soul-distress.

II.

O dim East, how incalculably far
Thou standest from the crimson of the West !
Yet not, in sooth, more distant than souls are—
Youth newly born,—uprising like yon star,
And age decreasing, as yon sun in rest.

III.

Each knows not each ; nor one the other's strain,
The other's passion, pleasure, or distress ;
Calm pulse of peace, or frenzied pang of pain,
Which mark an epoch in Birth's loss or gain
And Death's new sovereignty, or—Nothingness ?

IV.

How shall we know ? Can the dim East arise
And overlook the boundaries of the West ?—
Bending adown the balustrading skies
Scorched with the fever of day's dying sighs
And red with regal raiment laid at rest ?

V.

How can we know ? for all our souls are set
In separate grooves of choiceless destiny :
Wherein the friction of my spirit's fret
Inflames not thine, nor doth thy fever whet
A similar keenness in the soul of me.

VI.

How can we know? for our pent spirits speak
In thrills we share not neither can control,
Whose voice is like the little winds that streak
The surface-soul:—less heard than seen; and weak—
Howbeit breaths of the world's mighty soul!

VII.

O friend! it is not altogether vain
To know the Nothingness of all we know:
Since wisdom, sparing of all futile strain,
Forbears to grasp at that she cannot gain,
Content with these her rightful realms below.

VIII.

We may not know! But yonder in the West
Lies that to which we severally tend!
THIS well we know, but whether it be best
To seek or not to seek that finite quest,
We know not,—even whilst we onward wend.

IX.

Nay ! where we are, there tarry we,—until
The curtain lift, or we be summoned thence :
We are but units bound in sovereign Will ;—
Birds, that in fretting bruise their breasts, and chill
Another's gladness into dissonance.

* * * * *

X.

Then, 'neath the Nothing of the hoped-for-All,—
The shade misleading of delusive light,—
The lethargy of an unlifted pall,—
We drooped, and an intolerable thrall
Bound up our senses, and we swooned in night.



BOOK IV.—ATTAINING.

A SONG OF THE VOICE.

I.

Then, as when shipwrecked on a starless sea
Twain that survive the ruthless hurricane's
 strife
Insensate die of famine gradually
At sound of succour break from lethargy,—
So spake a voice recalling us to Life.

II.

And as that twain, by shade of midnight—blind
And by spent languor—dull to comprehend,
Discern not in those welcome accents kind
The tones of a familiar; so our mind
Failed in that VOICE to recognise a Friend :

III.

And knew not till the glad pulse madly leapt
From out that deathly lethargy of life ;
Knew not that one drew nearer as we wept,
Knew not that one drew closer as we crept
Into the sliding shadow of soul-strife ;

IV.

And with outstretchèd hands constrained us back,
Inspiring us as a sweet matin-bell
That hails the sunrise trembling on the track
Of night,—till straightway o'er the gloomy wrack
Our souls grew brighter with each accent's swell !

V.

Then spake the Voice :—" Lo ! I am even he
Born in you at the solemn hour of birth ;
Companioned as a cicerone in thee
And pioneering, ere thine eyes could see,
The passage of the Heaven-born Soul to earth :

VI.

“ Being all other than the Soul,—for I
Spake in you ere the Soul had power of tongue,
Or ever learnt earth’s language, save to sigh
That it could neither question nor reply,
Dormant and unconfessed as songs unsung :

VII.

“ And I,—ere yet your reason could conceive
Or thought leap up to greet mine utterance,—
Spake in you, and by instinct did achieve
That doing wrong thine infant eyes should grieve
And doing right grow wide with radiance :

VIII.

“ And this is more unquestionably true
In that experience verifies the truth—
That, never human lips proclaimed in you
The use of senses which within you grew,
Nor knowledge of the right,—well-known in youth :

IX.

“ Nor did the Soul at this same early age,
Nor yet the Heart, and least of all the Mind,
Reach all at first th’ admonitory stage :
But I was ever with thee to presage,
However dimly, right and wrong in kind.

X.

“ And living with thee I was e’en thy friend,
And all companionable to thy ways :
We dwelt in concord, as two lovers wend
With mutual will to cherish and defend,
Though this one leads and that one but obeys :

XI.

“ And, as befalls in true companionship,
The friends of each are mutually known,
And this one’s hand is held in welcoming grip
Of that one’s other comrade, so my lip
Named thee to Nature ere thy soul had grown :

XII.

“Who, seeking thee, was winning to thy ways ;
And thou didst laugh within her loveliness,
Gazing with infant wonder in thy gaze
At the big depths of ocean, and the rays
That gambol with the willow’s gleaming tress :

XIII.

“And life grew large to thee ere thou couldst gauge
The mightier intention of thy sphere ;
Or knew thyself a speck upon the page
Of chronicles, dusky with an age on age
Of dust raised by the Æon’s charioteer :

XIV.

“Small dust that gleams a moment in the sun
Seeming a thing so magically fair !
But dull and charmless when the day is done,—
Drooped to its native clay all men shall shun
And leave it in the depths to sodden there !

XV.

“ Small dust that on the impulse of a thought—
The veriest breath or segment of a sigh—
Up from its innate lowliness is caught
Faltering toward heaven, till backward thrust unsought,
Inherently unfitted for the sky !

XVI.

“ Men call me Conscience : but I am not he :
For conscience rather serves within the soul
Than lives in outward larger sovereignty
Over the mind and spirit born in thee :
Moreover, it seems somewhat in control

XVII.

“ Of action ; for the deed suggests its voice
Which otherwise were silent, and it needs
Some active influence, rather wrong for choice,
Before it speaks, for when men *do* rejoice
For joy of right, it scarcely even heeds :

XVIII.

“Moreover, as was written years of yore,
‘Either accusing or excusingly,’
Its thought finds utterance mainly to deplore
Some ill it knew but censured not before,
Thus rather following than leading thee.

XIX.

“But *I* am leader unto such as call,
Equally potent in the right as wrong ;
With power depending not upon the thrall
Of either actual or threatened fall,
But rather in all blamelessness more strong.

XX.

“Wherefore I bring you, for all purity
Unto the pure in action, soul, and speech,
Whereof is Nature, 'neath whose boundless sea,
Shine the white pearls which æons hid for thee,
Radiant in luminous halls that wait thy reach.”

A SONG OF FINDING.*

I.

Then I unto the Voice : “ This seems too much
Of truth to comprehend ; for many live
With Nature in incessant touch
Of heart and feeling, yet she leads not such
Into the rest thou sayest she can give ?

II.

“ They know not more with Nature for their guide
Than doth the crowd oblivious of her lot !
Prithee, thus seeking, wherefore have they sighed
Vainly for that thou sayest she'll confide
To such as seek with search that doubteth not ?”

* See *Appendix*, Note F.

III.

Whereon the Voice made answer unto me :—

“ Far other is it than at first ye feared,—
That Nature speaks to some and not to thee ;
For unto all she yearneth equally ;
And *this* is true,—as formerly appeared—

IV.

“ That, many introduced to Nature feel
Rather the passion of the heart and eye
Than of the soul ; wherefore she doth conceal
What she to a familiar would reveal
Touching her secret kinship with the sky :

V.

“ Of them thou knowest ; so it seemeth best
To rather speak of what she is to those
Who lean in loving silence on her breast—
Where knowledge finds an intellectual rest
And wisdom which is ripened in repose.

VI.

“Lo ! I that unto thee am more than sound—
Yea, more than the mellifluence of speech,—
Proclaim no partial mission, but am found
In each and all and every spirit round
The belted Zone’s interminable reach !

VII.

“I speak of things that are, and yet shall be :
I cast the cover from the days to come :
I drag the dawn from out your destiny :
Life’s secrecies, unseen by you, I see :
And Death unto my summons is not dumb !

VIII.

“Through my persuasion Nature comes to thee,—
Firstly my friend and then the friend of all :
And with impartial instinct equally
Makes visible to such as seek to see
The purport of the years that round us fall :

IX.

“Tis thine to enter her wide open doors
Which greet the lustre and the balminess
Of morn whose golden sunbeam treads the floors :
The olden-time familiar, whose rare stores
Of salient sunniness her lips caress.

X.

“Thine to behold her ceaseless sacrifice,
Within whose giving richer gifts accrue ;
Ye are as infants whom her breasts entice ;
Ye are as fondlings, whom she would suffice,
Howbeit faint for that she yields to you.

XI.

“Thine to believe that by her affluence,
And through the innate destiny she hath,
Ye may attain as she by slow suspense
Of sure conclusion up to the Immense,
Disheartened not by a circuitous path :

XII.

“ Thine to partake the wealth she proffers those
Who help the heedless or disheartened crowd :
Deterred not—howsoever much she knows
That many grains are sown for one that grows
Within the hearts that worship Truth, head-bowed :

XIII.

“ Wise to destroy when slaying is all-wise
And the reprieving would increase life-strife ;
Wise the surrender of her best supplies,
Propitiating fate with sacrifice
And death used instrumentally for life :

XIV.

“ Dimly discerning that in death of all
She hath there reigns the universal law
Of *life in death* ; and from the seeming fall
The liberated rising from all thrall
Of age, of seared decrepitude and flaw :

XV.

“ And, in the seeing spiritually, view
How this self-sacrifice were incomplete
Save that the living took advantage due
To them by death, to stablish and renew
Themselves in life, more exquisitely sweet :

XVI.

“ For e'en the very flames that gleam and glow
Inherit life and lustre from the fall
Which marked some vast primæval overthrow :
Whereof such parables divinely show
The Sacrifice of One is life to all.

XVII.

“ And evermore she leads you to proceed
Throughout the sweet gradations of the year,
From thought long dormant in the latent seed,
To germ, to blossom, and to fruit decreed,
To fill the granaries of some vast sphere ;

XVIII.

“ She leads, and leading, guides through Law to
Light ;

Her garments loosened that her limbs may ply
Up the wide staircase to her mansion's height,
By spiral tiers of touch, and sound, and sight,
And strong soul-senses wakeful to her cry :

XIX.

“ This then, the answer to thy plaint, in part—

Nature hath universal truth for each :
Each spirit is untrammelled at the start,
Though, loving with the soul as well as heart,
Some creep more near and catch the soul or
speech :

XX.

“ And, living closer, fond affection links

Their several energies in one delight :
Till every thought each relatively thinks
Is knit in pilgrimage, that by deep brinks
Essays the heights that bound the Infinite :

XXI.

“ Whose loftiest summit is the lord of all
High altitudes the human soul may reach,
For the BEYOND no mortal may forestall ;
Where failure lies and a predestined fall
Which bars the high conclusion we beseech :

XXII.

“ Which high conclusion, be it surely known,
Is never less than the relationship
Existing 'twixt the DEITY alone
And these our spirits ;—This, divinely shown,
Inspires the soul and wakens its mute lip :

XXIII.

“ Whence follows this :—That, somewhen it was
thine
To learn of Nature, in her lofty ways
That lead the human up to the Divine
By symbol eloquent within the line
Of all she is : for plainly she betrays

XXIV.

“ A motive in each action most minute :—

Nothing she doth or hath is objectless :

All that she ever sows is sown for fruit :

Yea, and her very silence is not mute

In stablishing her spirit's onward stress !

XXV.

“ And surely if that every part of her

Exist with visible purport, it were true

With even greater surety to aver

That she herself is also minister

Unto some End as yet concealed from view :

XXVI.

“ For, if each part of her is quick with aim,

And, if no portion of her loss is void,

And if the sequence of these parts the same

Build up the full fulfilment of her frame,

Why not that frame itself be thus employed ?

XXVII.

“ And if that frame be sequence to an end,
And since all end is greater than the means,—
So must the purpose whereunto she'll tend
Be loftier than the sphere her arms defend,
Vast heights which God's celestial lustre screens !

XXVIII.

“ Yea, this I KNOW, for I, the Voice, am sprung
From the predestined Evermore of man :
But this *ye* know not,—save as flashes flung
From flints of reason,—for what bard hath sung
The Laws of Being and of finite plan ?”



A SONG OF RECEIVING.

I.

O Voice-in-Light ! O Light that is in Voice !

O Being voidless though invisible !

I inly feel thee,—having never choice

But in thy coming straightway to rejoice,

And in thy going to grow sad and chill.

II.

All that is soul within us yearns to thine

As if the selfsame spirit quickened each :

Within thy strength all weaknesses of mine,—

Æons of earth in instants of Divine—

Crumble away whilst thou art by to teach.

III

I hold thee less and greater than thou seem ;
Less in that thou art only VOICE in me,
And cannot wholly lead me : Thou art gleam
Of brightness rather than the actual beam—
An echo rather than full harmony :

IV.

With power constrained, for thou thyself art part
Of law, and movest in a bounden range,—
A golden orb controlled and shaped at start
By the Supreme, and circling to man's heart
On lines whose limits *thou* canst never change :

V.

And yet I hold thee greater than thou say,
That ofttimes art an echoed Infinite,
Part of unseen circumference whose sway
Attracts the spiritual from our clay
In evolution hid from human sight.

VI.

I hold thee greater, for at times thy speech
Is savoured with imperishable TRUTH :
Phrase goodlier than human wit could reach,
Reason devise, or even spirit teach :—
Words steeled in sinews of immortal youth.

VII.

Seeming as 'twere a portioned part of GOD :
Even as Abraham greeted unawares ;
Or as of old ascended from the sod
What time the Burning-Bush inspired the rod
Which guided Israel up from Egypt's snares :

VIII.

A part of God which daily we may lose :
As, Moses, losing, lost full leadership ;
By hesitancy, which is slow to choose,
Or by self-consciousness which would refuse
Language God deems sufficient for our lip :

IX.

For verily it rests with us alone

How much of the High Infinite we hold :
As he, if but in touch with the Unknown,
Had recognised and risen to Its tone—
Since fear deserts the spirit love makes bold.

X.

And if in touch then instant to proceed—

Nobly,—without irrelevant excuse
On whatsoever mission is decreed :
For surely none are called save there be need,
And such as are should deem themselves of use ;

XI.

Undoubtingly,—for since we cannot know

The mighty End how judge the lesser means?—
Content to pass from Him that bade us go,
Less conscious of ourselves than of the glow
Within whose Glory the Immortal screens.

XII.

We waste our days in valleys of despair :

We chase void phantoms downward from the light,
Losing the radiance, and the accents fair,
The love, the leadership, uplifted where
Man's footsteps totter onward to God's height.

XIII.

And when upon the unfrequented steep

A sudden lustre breaks the loneliness,
A sudden summons makes the spirit leap,
We are not ready or perchance we sleep—
And only vision joys we might caress :

XIV.

Joys which make beautiful the temporal years,

With rich discovery of use in all :
And yet more beautiful, their several spheres ;
In that they lead by wide progressive tiers
Up to the finite purpose they forestall !

XV.

What Nature hath for earth, *thou* hast for me :

Thy path wends by a sudden growth of sweet,
The arid waste is hid in radiancy
Of bloom and verdure ; for the following thee
Catches the seed of plenty in our feet.

XVI.

Thou art the Finite of the Infinite!

The End and Aim of all things measureless !
The radiant summit of the golden light
That crowned the CHRIST transfigured to God's
sight—
The glory which enshrined His lowliness.



A SONG OF ASPIRATION.

I.

O Spirit-Voice, I follow thee afar ;
O Sound-in-Distance spanning the world wide !
O close Disseverance, set as a pale star
In purple skies wherein no sunbeams are,—
Until Day break, and thou no more art guide !

II.

Thee do I follow—for I know thee just,
As conscious of the shackles that I wear,
Which trailing 'neath me catch the mire and dust
Upon the world's broad labyrinth of lust,
Ambition, pleasure, passion, and despair.

III.

I doubt thee not, though oft-times thou art hid ;
Forget thee not, though sometimes thou art still ;
Deny thee not, though ever I am chid ;
Reproach thee not, though never am I bid
Up to the breadth of bliss thy pinions fill :

IV.

I hear thee in the voices of the trees,
And in the skylark's effervescing note :
Thy spirit shapes the cadence of the breeze,
Wakeful within the moaning of wild seas,
And placid where the swans serenely float :

V.

Thou hast broad gardens verdant with sweetbriar,
And breath of lily fills thine ample shrine,
Where pleasure of the red rose flames to fire,
And pæonies and poppies flash desire
In the convolvuli's convulsed entwine.

VI.

The rapturous rush of water sings of thee ;
Thine aim is imaged in progressive waves
That loiter not until at length they be
Merged in the vast of an unmeasured sea
To blend their minors with immortal staves.

VII.

I cannot wander onward through the day
Without a myriad tokens of thy life ;
Nor see the sunset abdicate his sway ;
Nor the young moon-queen race the eve away
And signal back her star-court as in strife ;

VIII.

Nor hear the cricket that so wondrous small
Asserts himself in note so wondrous large ;
Nor the unwearied winds that drive or drawl
Their ceaseless courses round this earthen ball—
Evolved in ether—eddièd by Time's barge ;

IX.

Nor feel the influence of the racing years,—
 Their summers flushed with hurrying away,
Their autumns sallow-faced with gloomy fears,
Their winters stained with unproductive tears,
 Their springs that, tide-like, struggle into spray ;

X.

O Voice ! O Presence ! I can neither see
 Earth's ever-wondrous marvelments sublime,
Nor heed their accents, murmurous in me,
Nor feel their influence, but I know 'tis thee,—
 Thou Multiform !—whose span outreaches time.

XI.

And I am greater in that THOU art friend,
 Exalted,—elevated for a space ;
Until such time as thou dost reascend
When wearily, despondingly I wend,
 And, e'en tear-blinded, find my lowly place.

XII.

I doubt thee not,—though all around be dim,
When the storm's dripping drift away life's
bloom ;
Though winter-rain lie rusty on the rim
Of wreaths long-coveted ; yea, though clouds brim
My spirit's mansion, bright shall be thy room

XIII.

And ever sacred to thy welcome tread,
None other step than thine shall enter in ;
My bosom shall be pillow to thy head,
And thou shalt sing to me till night hath led
Her wailing winds away, and day begin.

XIV.

Thy place is stablished,—thy repose is set
Beside the hearth where cedar logs are lit,
Whereby are beakers which no lips have met
And the elixirs that divinely whet
The thirst of generous good whilst soothing it.

XV.

Come to me in the silence of the night,
When every earthly utterance forsakes !
Come to me ! guised in mystic planet-light,
Or as a starbeam silvering in midflight
The vast wide world of shadow it awakes :

XVI.

And I shall rise and open wide the door,
As one unlatching to the noiseless love
Of shapely feet that scarcely touch the floor ;
And in the opening, lo ! around and o'er,
Thy light shall spread and circle me above.

XVII.

Thus shalt thou come, and I shall kiss thy feet
And serve thee with endearments of delight,
For in thy loss my life were incomplete
As, in thy finding, life is all things sweet,
And in thy love illimitably bright.

XVIII.

And gentle night shall seem a silver day

Too sweet, too exquisite, to lose in sleep,
Whither thou lookest shall be bright with ray,
So shall I try to meet thy eyes and say :—

“ Deny me not a draught of radiance deep !”

XIX.

For light is the elixir of the soul ;

Wherefore I whisper :—“ Let me drink to-night ;”
For I am thirsting even past control
And, unappeased, would rather Lethe roll

Its ripples round my lips, than bear this blight !

XX.

“ O satisfy me ! for howbeit clay

I hold within me that which knows thee sweet,
A Spirit-Sense that calls thee *kin* always,
And, in thine influence, stablished 'neath thy sway,
Finds wings which lift life's bruised and stumb-
ling feet.

XXI.

“ Yea, would I drink, and in the drinking be
 Raised over men and angels of the air ;
For I would steal and blend thy beams in me,
And make me wings wherewith I should be free
 And sail with thee through aerial regions rare.”



A SONG OF SINGING.

I.

O strong contagion of the Soul of Praise !
 Anthems of ocean : litanies of lakes :
Psalms of the solitude whose raptures raise
The bowing bosoms of responsive braes ;
 Ye thrill the reverence that in me wakes !

II.

Far in the distance droops the jar of pain
 The moan—the groan whose stifling leaves us
 spent ;
And all the slow sad surges which retain
The soul in bondage from its yearned-for gain
 Of unmolested havens of content.

III.

I feel no more the gnawing agonies

Which chill the heart what time they fire the brain ;
Whose sigh—whose tear—like spray from wind-
washed seas

Dashes the leaf from life's glad summer trees
And sears the stem with an enduring stain.

IV.

For in that grove's Cathedral-choir of Song
Some latent soul within me all unheard
And slumbrous unsuspected in me long,
Broke from her covert and with pinion strong
Floated upon the music as a bird.

V.

And as the culver with the branch of peace,
So came she back and solaced all my days
With melody ; and craved no more release
But bode with me—an echo loath to cease :
Whereof these Songs—remembered from her lays.

See APPENDIX.

Notes E.—THE VOICE.

„ F.—UNITY IN NATURE.

BOOK V.—FULFILLING.



A SONG OF INTERLUDE.

I.

The happy birds upon the air
Have broken into spells of song ;
And, mounting through the morning glare,
Renew the strains which languish there
From some that sang the whole night long.

II.

Thus the high pedigree of praise
Links Age with Age and man with man ;—
For when one wearies in his lays
Another kindred soul will raise
The faltering cadence he began.

III.

Now round yon cape of willow-trees
A shallop races with the wind ;
But soon deserted by the breeze,
Disconsolate in tamer seas,
She frets in stillness unresigned.

IV.

But the enduring steersman leaves
The useless rudder, and by force
Impels the oar, until she heaves
And, thrilling every nerve, achieves
Her long premeditated course.

V.

So falls it e'en to him most blest
With happy circumstance of fate,—
When traitorous fortune spurns the quest
Himself must shape and speed the rest,
And, whilst propelling, steer his freight.

VI.

A fern that threaded dews of night
Discoloured pearls upon a cord,
When dawn rose, scattering from his height
Unnumbered diamonds of light,
She loosed and cast them on the sward.

VII.

Thus we, with unformed knowledge, prize
As goodly, in the lesser glow,
A rapture worthless in the eyes
Of heaven, when to it we rise
And contrast what earth's joys bestow.



A SONG OF MY HEART AND I.

I.

Returning westward—where the lake is wide
And dim Menaggio fronts Varenna's shore—
A bird's song, rising like a vocal tide
Against our voyage from the yonder side,
Allays our speed until its burst is o'er :

II.

We drift and, drifting, hearken to its strain ;—
Clear depths around, and twinklings of the wave
High overhead the luminous skies' domain,
And summits whose unblemished breasts retain
The last fond flush departing daylight gave :

III.

Then, as the melody makes swift ascent
 Into the easeful anchorage of Space,
Within the stillness after song is spent
I stole a chord which Song in silence blent
 And woke a strain which slept in its embrace :

IV.

Singing unto mine Heart:—"Thine ears have heard
 Innumerable ministrings of song,
Hast thou no strain which like yon soaring bird
Pants ever upward till it be interred
 Within the light to which its lays belong ?"

V.

To which my Heart saith: "Yea, but there are some,
 And many, who have richer notes than I ;
And oftentimes despondency will dumb,
Or desolating callousness benumb,
 The warm breath which incites the Muse's sigh !"

VI.

I said unto mine Heart :—" Be not afraid !

Confront the ills thou canst not all control ;
For as yon Alp outlives the long decade,
Bearing the shadow of perpetual shade
In purity, so even with the soul."

VII.

But my Heart answered :—" Nay, but some are high,
And live in elevation of high deeds :
And o'er the cloud they ofttimes view the sky,
And grasp with stainless hands the beams that ply
From the sun's nighness to their upraised needs."

VIII.

Then I :—" O envy not ! none know the weight
Of loftier aims, and energies that lift
Beseeching eyes to Heaven's high estate,
Save such as bear the burthen of this fate,
For these are they that catch the shadow's drift.

IX.

“ I’ve seen a summit darkened week by week,—
 Whelmed in a blinding agony of gloom
Wherein was never voice of Song, nor streak
Even of starlight, and the vulture’s beak
 Gnawed at its vitals, as it were a tomb :

X.

“ And e’en its tear froze as a daggering dart
 To frenzy its own passion ; and the rude
And lacerating elements scarred its heart ;
And when at length the winter did depart
 Spring brought no bloom to deck its solitude :

XI.

“ But all the while the little vales below
 And every lesser summit of small hills
Were lustreful with a perennial glow :
And song succeeded cadence in a flow
 Fed by illimitable vocal rills.”

XII.

“Then,” said my heart, “’twere best in levelment
Of mind and soul to grasp life’s lower fruit :
Conserving the calm tenor of content,
With feelings strung as suits their several bent
Lest life be jarred, as tension jades the lute.”

XIII.

“Not so,” I said, “Contentment fits the soul
Of lunacy, of ignorance, or love :
But Greatness comprehends a grander goal ;
Whose winning lieth part in our control
And part beyond—which yet we climb above ;

XIV.

“For happiness lies not in aimless ease—
(As the Hellenic Sage hath truly said)—
The shallop frets that fronts unbreezeful seas,
But with a wind her swift activities
Laugh back the wave, and gain the port, toil-spced

XV.

“Aims fill the hour that otherwise were void—
For else the brain would rot in lethargy :
And being less impoverished as employed
Thought flutters up—a songster overjoyed
To use the wing created to be free :

XVI.

“Made musical by ministering thrills
Of that bright Spirit-sense of which we sang,
Sweet Voice-in-silence when the midnight chills
The chords of life, or wing of sorrow stills
Some slender string with desolating clang :

XVII.

“Made musical in knowing that the range
Of spirit-life is vaster than we deem ;
Melodious, as a skylark in the change
Of marshy meads for altitudes unstrange
To the inherence of his happy dream :

XVIII.

“ Using all bright external charm to cheer
And stimulate this Spirit-sense of Soul,
Whose inmost thrill is harmonised to hear
The outer utterance of accents clear
Which guide immortal Being to its goal :

XIX.

“ Let the immortal beauty of the Good,
And good enduring in the Beautiful,
Reign sovereign in our spirit's solitude,
That all the blemished populace be withstood—
Awed by a majesty none durst annul :

XX.

“ Let Love tune tenderness within life's strain,
Chorus our songs in parallels of tone,
Caress away the minors from its pain,
Incite its drooping heavenward again
For loan of bliss Heaven lends to Love alone.

XXI.

“And let all Song be gracious in our ears :—
Sweet is the lute—as they that tune it know !
Wherefore sing on—albeit no one hears !
'Tis not the influence but the *utterance* cheers
The heart whose thrill awakes the minstrel's throe !

XXII.

“O little songs which Nature's spell hath wrung
From out the music of the World's great heart !
O little strains which my full soul hath sung
And set to chords immemorably strung
By Nature's sweet imaginative art !

XXIII.

“O Songs in Silence, which upon my breath—
My breath which is the ebbing life of me—
Have floated from me, whether ye find death
In some chill heart or home in one that saith
“Glad are the echoes which Song's feet awake !”

XXIV.

“ I sing ye since ’tis ever good to sing :—

Dull is the heart that silences its joy !

Cold is the soul that cannot sometimes ring

A chime of sympathy or welcoming

To speed another’s respite or employ !”



A SONG OF SACRIFICE.

I.

Then silence stole upon my heart of hearts
As after skirmish of the wind and wave
The full-tide plenitude no more imparts,
But rather turns and thrills to the wind's darts ;
So surged my heart to all she gained and gave :

II.

Musing,—as swayed by each conflicting claim—
“ Life is a paradoxical distress !
Since there's no happiness without an aim,
Happy-that-seems is happy but in name :
Whilst happy aims must forswear happiness.

III.

Musing :—" Alas ! but life is short and long :

Easy and difficult ; sunny and sad ;

With contraries inexplicably strong :—

Wrong coiled in Right : and Right unwreathed
from Wrong :

Folly in wits ; and wisdom with the mad :

IV.

" Hatred in love,—since they that love us most

Smile to our jest, yet ridicule the tear

Whose spring is yearning for the distant coast

Their longings touch not :—they the first to toast

A triumph fallen to their aimless sphere !

V.

" And to complete the paradox, this thing

Which we misnomer LIFE in sooth is death :

And he whom we call DEATH is one whose wing

Is only dusk with soil of travelling

To raise the Life-elixir to our breath.

VI.

Musing :—" In narrow boundaries of good
The feet of life to finite purpose tend :
And howsoe'er sweet bower and dreamy wood
Decoy our courage they must be withstood—
Lest strength desert us ere we reach the End.

VII.

" Peace look we not for,—save the peace that's pent
In the Achieving or the Would-achieve :
Solace we seek not—save in the content
Exhaled in every sigh of hope we vent :—
For few there be who sow for them that weave !"

* * * * *

VIII.

To which an inner instinct made reply :—
(A secret spring which, rising neath the deep
Of my heart's deadness, ebbd away its sigh
And in a current of white waves and high
Uplit the surface-gloom with heavenward leap.)

IX.

“ The days of visible sacrifice are sped,
But evermore the principle survives ;
Not now we come with oxen garlanded,
Not now the altar kindled 'neath the dead,
But in *ourselves* we wreath the perfect lives.

X.

“ I hold it sure that whoso lives to wield
A healthy actual influence in Thought,
Or in more physical energies afield,
Must need accustom heart and soul to yield
The *Ever-Would* unto the *Ever-Ought*.

XI.

“ The *W'ould* is passing easy to attain,
Since all our preference labours in its hire,
The *Ought*—which is the thing the soul should gain,
Is struggled-for against the mutinous strain
Of our own selves, and oft against desire.

XII.

“ And being in itself more hard to reach
Than the indulgences which ceaseless lie
About our path, (as falls the ripened peach
With wanton boast of beauty to beseech
The gaze that else had heedless passed it by),

XIII.

“ It needs a closer and more stedfast aim,
Since of a truth however much at birth
We know the right, we seldom love its name,
Nor hath it influence as wrong can claim,
Nor favours to accentuate its worth :

XIV.

“ Thence this is sure, that such as seek to gain
High things must firstly fit themselves to live
Concordantly with highness, and to train
Their instincts till they scarcely feel the strain,
As athletes who would be superlative.

XV.

“ And this is more imperatively true
Since some by right of birth have wealth or wit,
(The many noble and the sovereign few ;)
But none are born with goodness as their due,
Nor can the pure their purity transmit :

XVI.

“ But minds we have, and with them intellect,
And with the intellect the power to prove ;
And there are written records circumspect,
And tomes Divine with saintly wisdom deckt
Which circumscribe the spirit's onward move.

XVII.

“ But all were nothing save we be intent
To win the heights of the attainable ;
The soul must be consistent in its bent,—
One weakly link and lo the chain is rent,
And one small moment crowns a year with hell !

XVIII.

“ Wherefore, first knowledge of ourselves, that we
Should be equipped for all we would withstand ;
And then the watchfulnesss with wit to see
’Neath the disguise the foe that binds the free ;
Or leads them into ambush with false hand.

XIX.

“ And sure discrimination lest we lose
All sense of taste by living on the sweet,
Far less suspicious of the charms we choose,
Than e’en of those we scornfully refuse,
Since they first fall that deem themselves complete.”

XX.

Then spake mine heart :—“ The higher life that aims
At loftier things is sacrifice always :
Even as Abram,—severed from acclaims
On the hill’s silence, whets the blade that maims
His own heart’s happiness with that it slays.

XXI.

“ For even weary we must onward wend ;
 Since never yet was spirit nobly great
That would not speed its mission to the end
However much the hostile pathways rend
 The bleeding feet which follow lofty Fate :

XXII.

“ And doubtless it achieves a sweeter joy,
 As loftier ridges catch the purer light :
But yet the very distance needs destroy
All concord with dissimilar employ,—
 To leave it lonely on a luminous height !”



A SONG OF EVENTIDE.

I.

Now, o'er the intervening waters dumb,
Bellagio's belfry, weary of the day,
Chimes clamorously for the night to come :
Whilst the sun's going hushes the earth's hum,
And spells the fever of life's strain away :

II.

And twilight falls,—like prayer that softens all
Vain longing, loving, striving, and despair :
Twilight, that lays on labour's restless thrall
An easeful shade ; and over life, the pall
That hides the dust of hopes no longer fair.

III.

But whilst the ministering sun's intent
On climbing the high ranges to uplift
The gloom of some yet slumbrous continent,
The glory of a lesser light is blent,
Vice-regal o'er the wide domain of night.

IV.

Yet not before the land is hushed for her,—
Respectful to her dignified estate
The breezes barely whisper as they stir,
The birds are stilled, with scarcely one demur,
And the stars trim their beacons as they wait :

V.

Now comes the moon ! and lo ! the nightingale
Makes music of her sovereignty of light,
And serenades the slumber of the vale ;
Whilst, all too rapt for speech, the woods exhale
Soft odorous sighs of greeting at the sight.

VI.

And of the night ! how shall I sing of it ?

O God ! thy stars must blazon its delight
Upon the page whereon earth's joys are writ !
And all the generous joyaunce they have lit
Let the pure plumes of angel-pinions write !

VII.

See ! how the water, ruffled by the air,
Grows luminous,—as if by light o'ercast
From the bright seraph-ministers of prayer ;
Whose wings with strong infection of things fair
Turned the black waves to silver as they passed !

VIII.

How can I sleep for boding when I wake
I may have missed the flutter of a song
Down-faltering like a feather in the wake
Of jubilant choirs ; or, on the listening lake,
The mirrored forms of some seraphic throng ?

IX.

O for one hour of unmolested flight

That I might waft my pinions o'er Life's shade ;
And, soaring upward, pulsed with wild delight,
Surmount the deep recesses of the night
And enter into daylight undismayed !



A SONG OF BELLAGIO.

I.

Bellagio ! if ever in my after-dreams

The spirit of fond nightly counsels fair
Should seek a scene wherein all beauty seems
The dimmer pencillings of perfect gleams,
Lo, I, in following, shall find *thee* there !

II.

And in a vision I shall see thy shore :

And by the marge the tinted sails of ships :
And on the prow the silken bales, and o'er
The mizenmast the bannered cross that bore
The curse of bondage from Italia's lips :

III.

And at the helm, the stedfast form of him
Who calculates the pulses of the prow :
And by the idle rowlocks them that trim
The loosened bosom of the sail, and limb
The amorous wind to murmur there love's vow.

IV.

Triumphant she, what time his lips prevail :
And while he tarries, tremulous with bliss ;
But, frail thy faltering, O sad love-sick sail,
When the fleet ardours of his passion fail,
And thy breast heaves to his departing kiss !

V.

Alas ! the drooped dejection when he goes ;
The nerveless apathy ; the anguish mute ;
The utter loneliness of life that knows
The bitterest bitterness is that which grows
And cankers in the sweetness of love's fruit.

VI.

And, in the vision, mine enraptured eyes
Would note the exquisite colour of the hills—
Olive and sycamore ;—and pine, that lies
Twixt Giovanni's silken industries
And the bright bay which Melzi's palace fills :

VII.

Should watch the skies—bluer than aught that be,
Save such, methinks, which mid the fulsome fume
Of grim Vesuvius by far Napoli
Seem azure isles engulfed in sullen sea,
Or turquoise studded in enamel gloom :

VIII.

And, breeze-companioned, skirt the southern side ;
Or with an odorous western wind for pard,
Compass the water's narrow width of tide
To sweet Carlotta's marble staircase wide,
Sung by the gentle Transatlantic Bard,

IX.

Where files of plane surmount the entrance-flight
Tethered with trellised banksians stedfastly :
And on the upward slope azaleas—bright
With sunny springtide's prodigal delight,
And rhododendrons flushed with ecstasy.

X.

Here [in the halls where Cupid woos his love,
Perfect in passion marble-white and pure ;
Where Psyche yearns toward him that bends above,
And through the lattice croons the culver dove—
“Let sovereigns die but sovereign love endure !”]

XI.

My spirit murmurs, emulous of all
The affluence which glad light and love bestow,
“Lo there is frailty, failure here, and fall
In aught that aims at Beauty save it call
And thrill as these to some responsive throe.”

XII.

And straightway feels the vision incomplete,
And leaning up toward Heaven, sighs,—“Bright
land
Satiety of earth lies neath the sweet
For lack of Heaven!” . . .
. . . Then, flurried sound and beat
Of sudden wings tumultuously fanned,

XIII.

Flutters the solemn silence of the stars !
And one descendeth to me as a bird
That has been loosened from bright golden bars,
But loves not liberty nor the rough jars
And strain of toil perpetually stirred

XIV.

Then knew I surely Love had floated down
On winds desirous of content, and I
Enfolding her unto my heart did crown
Her brow with kisses, and passionately drown
Her breath with kisses,—sparing but love's sigh.

XV.

And all her smile became as wealth in me ;
Gold grew unlustreful : the lengthy lands—
Where the contented corn nods drowsily
Surged like the slow swell of a soulless sea —
Reckoned as nothing to my heart's demands :

XVI.

Glitter of fame was nothing *save for her*,
A thing of nought,—a firefly on the sea ;
And olden joys seemed blotted out with blur
Of barrenness beneath those eyes that stir
Love's flame to sudden surge of sparks in me.

XVII.

Existence with a lengthened growth of wing
Soared from the plain of pleasure's low delight ;
And, mounting heavenward, straight began to sing
As if the sunbeams were a golden string
Swept by the joyous pinions of her flight

XVIII.

“ Let me arise and trebly bless,” I said,
“ All humankind and species for her sake,
Yea, for the precious sake of her who led
My life from apathy, and fondly fed
The heart of me, let all things good awake !

XIX.

“ That men may see how good it is to love,
And how man’s grosser instincts ’neath the ray
And passionate fervour of its fire may prove
In porcelain purity the far remove
Which love effects and fashions e’en from clay !”

XX.

Then, sweet Bellagio, when mine angel-dove
Nestling beside me saith :—“ To thee I’m given
In answer to thy dream-plaint heard above,”
The enraptured dream-soul in me sighs—“ *With love*
Call not this clime Bellagio but Heaven !”

A SONG OF FAREWELL.

I.

I breathe Farewell ! Not knowing if again
Mine eyes shall sparkle to thy sunny smile :
Not knowing if with yon moon's splendid wane
The light of thee shall pass from my life's strain—
In shade completed an unbroken while.

II.

The stars abide, as other gleams I know
Will cast a fitful radiance on my dreams :
But ah ! there trembles in each lesser throe
The fashion of some sweet First-passion's glow
Till the eye weeps that tears may dull its gleams.

III.

Shall I be happy knowing thou art fair
In other eyes when I am far away ?
Or were I happier knowing that black care
Sat on the clouds, and mesmerized thee there
Until thy lips grow pallid, thy smile grey,

IV.

And thine eyes dimmed in searching after light :
Sighing,—“ If love were here then were I lit !”
And weeping,—“ Nay, he cometh not to-night :
And, Oh ! there rise no morrows to my sight,
For Care sits 'neath the sun and shadows it.”

V.

Nay ! Be thou blest in all that makes thee glad :
I knew thee joyous, let me dream thee so !
Since if I came and found thee ever sad,
Knowing thee not, my heart would deem me mad,
And I should weep for very weight of woe.

VI.

Yield thou the joys for which thy life was given,
Thou that art Nature's messenger of peace ;
That whom thou seest weary and grief-riven,
Exiled from home, or homeless wanderer driven
From land to land and finding no release,

VII.

Thou mayest bless with bounties of soft sighs :
That in thy life the self of grief be lost :
As one's own form no longer will arise
Within the glass we gaze on with sad eyes
If but one breath of love be on it tost.

* * * * *

VIII.

FAREWELL ! Farewell ! for me, far distant seas :
For thee,—sweet tides with Heaven on thy breast—
God knows how much thy love hath done to ease
My being,—and He grudges not to these
Poor human instincts to be blest with rest !

APPENDIX.

A.

NOTE TO SONG OF COMO.

In these days it is scarcely more necessary to speak of the localities than of the loveliness of Lake COMO.

There are larger—perhaps more beautiful—lakes known to the thousands who travel : yet the very name of Como carries with it that attractiveness which is its especial charm.

The allusions in the text (however inadequate, as all words must be, to express such experience of beauty,) will, I trust, be found accurate by those who treasure sunny memories of the lakes of Lombardy ; but to those who have never visited Como the allusions in the various songs may be made more intelligible by a few prose details—the principal features mentioned in the text are emphasised with italics.

Like a Greek λ , the lake is divided into three parts. It is where these divisions meet round the richly-wooded height of SERBELLONI that the scene of the poem is laid.

Beneath our feet lies *Bellagio*, opposite to *Cadenabbia* on the western shore. Northward the eye traces the united waters till lost amid the hills which front the distant summits of the *snow-crowned Alps*. Of near mountains *Monte Crocione*, *Monte Primo*, and the Marble Hill over *Varenna*, are most conspicuous. The

village of *San Giovanni*, situated southward from Bellagio, faces the *Tremezzina*—a walk undulating with the shore from *Tremezzo* to Cadenabbia by the *Villa Carlotta* (wherein is Canova's *Cupid and Psyche*).

Of this district PLINY was a native, and VIRGIL has celebrated its beauty in song. Nor is it without interest in our present connection to remark that Italy has always been linked with the Literature of England: in her learned centres were preserved those studies of form which caused Song to linger still when her creative sway had practically passed to other lands; and a long chain of English poets, from Surrey to the Brownings, have felt her personal influence strong to develop poetic faculty. Not alone as in the *Daisy*—our present laureate's foreign sketch—do men still pass, as he went,

"From Como when the light was grey
And in my head for half the day
The rich Virgilian rustic measure
Of Lãri Maxume all the way. . . ."

but new songs have sprung into being under the Italian skies, or trace their origin to inspiration thence brought home.

WORDSWORTH was perceptibly influenced by his study of the *Georgics* in his productive years, consoled by feeling himself in touch with Virgil across the centuries, when the array of English talent was against him whom it but recognised by ridicule. He twice visited this lake, once before he really knew himself, and again in 1820 before others had any practical ideas of his power, though indeed his best work was done for ever.

Surely he has well described in prose what I may call the Lake-Feeling,—in words equally applicable to the Lakes of Lombardy as to the waters of Windermere:—

. . . . "The presence of a lake is indispensable to exhibit to perfection the beauty of one of these days; and (one) . . . must have experienced, while looking on the unruffled waters, that the imagination by their aid is carried into recesses of feeling otherwise impenetrable. The reason of this is, that the Heavens are not

only brought down into the bosom of the earth, but that the earth is mainly looked at and thought of through the medium of a purer element. . . . It may happen that the *figure of one of the larger birds*—a raven or a heron—is crossing silently among the reflected clouds, while the voice of the real bird, from the elements aloft, gently awakens in the spectator the recollection of appetites and instincts, pursuits and occupations, that deform and agitate the world, yet have no power to prevent Nature from putting on an aspect capable of satisfying the most intense cravings for the tranquil, the lovely, and the perfect, to which man, the noblest of her creatures, is subject."

B.

NOTE TO SONG OF TWO CADENABBIAS.

Since I wrote this Lyric the following passage was shown to me :
" Each Leaf or Flower-form has a counterpart, usually so unlike itself in appearance that no resemblance can be detected by the eye, but governed by the same mathematical formula applied inversely."
(*Symbolical Methods of Study*, p. 49.)

This song may be taken in three ways :—simply, as it was first written, as a sketch of one of the most soothing effects of lake scenery, its mysterious loveliness of reflection, and, as a suggestion of the *restful* power of sympathy : also, it preludes the harmonies attempted to be struck in later Songs,—that, since all that man knows in this life is dual, the Finite has relations to the Infinite, earth is linked to Heaven.

C.

NOTE TO SONG OF CONTRAST.

"Grasp some lesson worthy of life's reach."

There are very few even among well-informed people who know or who really seem to believe one of the most evident truths in the history of human progress. The truth is—that Poetry has a practical Influence on national life ; and that, in proportion as a writer has the power and the insight of the poet he is called to work important as and perhaps as durable as that of the politician or any other wielder of social forces.

For an example of how poetry has led the leaders of the busiest century that the world has seen, we have simply to trace backward almost any new movement until we find it opposed with bitterness or scorned as revolutionary or absurd when originally theorised in the writings of a poet who perceived that its time was ripe. Speaking on this subject, Mr. Matthew Arnold once observed, that :

"If it is said that Goethe professes in this way to have deeply influenced but few persons, and those persons poets, one may answer that he could have taken no better way to secure in the end the ear of the world. . . Nevertheless, the process of liberation, though sure, is undoubtedly slow."

The whole question might well occupy a volume, and even "the Defence of Poesie" in regard to the interpretation of NATURE is far too lengthy to enter upon here. Referring my younger readers (among other aids in study of the poets at first hand), to Professor Shairp's excellent little volume, *The Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, to Mr. Stopford Brooke's suggestive Lectures, entitled *Theology in*

the English Poets, to Mr. Frederick Myers' *Life of Wordsworth*, etc., etc.—I would again quote from our late laureate.

The first passage gives his theory of the poetic office. It was written eighty years ago. Now, scarcely a day passes when in speech, article, or biography the influence of Wordsworth is not asserted. This is a letter written when he might well have despaired of himself, and of the value of all he wrote; yet among the then despised poems are some which his country now considers standard creations of the century.

Addressing Lady Beaumont, in 1807, he says: "At present, let me confine myself to my object, which is to make you, my dear friend, as easy as myself with respect to the poems. Trouble not yourself upon their present reception. Of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny?—*To console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making the happier happier: TO TEACH THE YOUNG AND THE GRACIOUS OF EVERY AGE TO SEE, TO THINK AND TO FEEL*, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous: this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is all that is mortal of us), are mouldered in our graves."*

Let me now give the conclusion of Professor Shairp's little book, as bearing upon the importance of *the poetry of Nature*.

"And Wordsworth alone, adding the philosopher to the Poet, has speculated widely and deeply on the relation in which Nature stands to the soul of man, and on the truths suggested by this relation. In that relation and along the line of thoughts which radiate from it, is to be found *the true interpretation of Nature,—that interpretation which the soul of man still craves, after Science has said its last word. . . .* This interpretation, however, is a truth which can only be apprehended by the moral imagination: that is, the imagination filled with moral light, and which will commend itself only to the most thoughtful men in their most feeling moods. It is not likely ever to be vindicated by logical processes, or tabulated in scientific

* The italics are mine.—J. W. G.-S.

registers. Not the less for that *it is a vital truth, attesting itself, as all vital truths do, by the harmony it brings into all our thoughts,—by the response it finds in the inner man.*"

Notwithstanding that this "is a truth which can only be apprehended by the moral imagination," and that the imagination, even at its fullest and ripest, falls short of *utterance*, I have not been disheartened in attempting an audible interpretation of much that is silently familiar to many in the teachings of nature, feeling convinced that the Sphere of Poetry, always inclusive of the Beautiful in Religion, Nature and Science, is as comprehensive of practical effect as of spiritual insight; and, that further, the Poetry of Nature (though it may seem, and is, in production almost unconscious), demands severe toil, as it claims the highest faculties of those who seek to hear and to interpret the *music* of those Universal Harmonies.

However great Wordsworth may be—especially as a pioneer,—there is much to be done in time by those who have power; the world is larger, and man's universe is yet more noble, since the beginning of the century's discoveries in the realms over which poetry must assert her manorial rights.

The philosophy of the Unconscious is claiming these riches: so far as its assertions are true they are best utilised, so far as they are false they are better negated and counteracted, by the Poetry of the Conscious.

D.

NOTE TO SONG OF TRINITY IN NATURE.

In Roget's *Thesaurus* I find that "Trinity is hardly ever used except in a theological sense." Nevertheless, there is no other single word convenient for the purpose of expressing a triple thought,—a triad of ideas,—which meets the thinker at the outset of his quest of knowledge. At once he is confronted with Mystery

which his mind refuses either to acknowledge as limited or to understand as illimitable—the Absolute or the Infinite ; then, in regarding Nature, if he sees nothing else, by intuition and experience he knows that her work—(which he personifies as her Being)—is continuous ; further, he feels himself limited on all hands by what proceeds from the other two forces, as he supposes, and, except in possible relationship either to the Infinite or to the Continuous, he must recognise himself as finite.

Thus, as symbols wherewith to perform this operation of thought these three terms, the Infinite, the Continuous, and the Finite, (or GOD, NATURE, and MAN), must be taken as equal ; whereas what is signified by such symbols can by no possibility be considered as even comparable. Therefore the use of the word Trinity is justifiable in this connection.

The Sequence of QUESTIONING (from the Song of Pines to the Song of Revolution), so far as lyrical limitations and my present strength will allow, suggests what may be found in Nature ; teachings which perhaps justify the higher Pantheism of some, teachings certainly of Law and of Order ; intellectual pleasure ; influence strengthening individual minds ; and, as the concluding Lyric of Darkness indicates, the certainty that, in the most violent convulsion of established rule, vitality ever regenerates itself for new eras, and cannot be destroyed although individual type be doomed. Much more than this Nature—as NATURE—cannot teach.

It may be thought that this too readily yields ground to those who deny that there is any spiritual world. Yet men have lost the strongest position by not blowing up weaker outworks, and there are many truths which a logician abandons to his adversary with the greatest benefit to his own argument.

Whatever his theological leanings, no one but acknowledges the mental acuteness of Cardinal Newman ; *he* has said : That “ It is a great question whether Atheism is not as philosophically consistent with the phenomena of the physical world taken by themselves (that is, *apart from psychological phenomena*, apart from moral considerations, apart from the moral principles by which they

must be interpreted, apart from that idea of God which wakes up in the mind under the stimulus of intellectual training) as the doctrine of a creative and governing Power."

It is for such reasons that the Sequence of Nature ends with Storm, at once destructive and restorative, and this is why (in the Poem and in Philosophy), he who feels that there *is* a Trinity in Nature, is not satisfied until he has questioned not only the Continuous, but the Finite, and, if it may be, the Infinite Itself.

E.

NOTE TO THE SONG OF THE VOICE.

It would be impossible within the limits of a note to give the full theory which is suggested in the lyric of THE VOICE. I can only indicate its place :—Following the leaders of what may be classed as the Platonic school of thought (we have no good general term for this tendency of the intellect), many minds are convinced of the existence of a spiritual world. Naturally,—though aware of the incompleteness of such a method, *per se*,—thinkers have attempted to analyse the structure of their own minds to find data for personal conviction.

They recognise the instincts of Hereditary Faculty, further knowing these to be modified by time, circumstance and education ; they receive the teaching of Experience, and listen for its reflex action of Conscience ; they accept the conclusive powers of trained and exercised Reason ; they feel the mysterious productive forces of Imagination and of Intellect ; but—perhaps in direct proportion to the greatness of their own genius—these thinkers have been deeply impressed with a sense that, *supplementing* all these media of knowledge, there *is* a "Non-Ego" which is in some way LEADER to the responsive souls of men. This leader teaches as no human being

can or does teach ; arrives at results within the worker's mind which transcend reason and antedate experience ; is assured of absolute right and wrong ; appears to use and dominate natural gifts, and in the words of the English Platonist More, seems "To know better what we would be at than we do ourselves." To cite what men have said on this recognised Influence would be to recount the treasures of the world of thought ; for they *have* spoken

"As if the self-same spirit quickened each."

Song of Receiving.

In one sense, therefore, the thought of this lyric, and of the rest of this Sequence, is *not* novel : (what of metaphysical thought ever was ?) Yet I believe that the form in which it came to me *is* new to English Poetry, and perhaps some day it may again be presented in other guise.

Since writing the *Song of the Voice*, I have been reminded that Miss Barrett, when working in conjunction with R. H. Horne, author of the "farthing epic" *Orion*, (a book which has since been bought by the guinea) proposed that they should together write a drama to be entitled *Psyche Apocalypié*. Before much more than the skeleton had been constructed, the poetess had a severe illness. Her marriage followed. The notes, etc., were afterwards published with her letters, but the work itself was left incomplete.

Naturally this memorandum of an uncreated poem cannot be said to prove anything, but, having independently visioned the thought of what to me is a VOICE,—(to others perhaps a Presence,)—I was gratified to observe some coincidence between my own conception and the inchoate idea of one so sensitive to finest spiritual feeling as the gifted author of "Sonnets from the Portuguese."

"My idea," writes Miss Barrett, "the terror attending spiritual consciousness—the man's soul to the man—is something which has not, I think, been worked hitherto, and seems to admit of a certain grandeur and wildness in the execution.

"The awe of this soul-consciousness breaking into occasional lurid "heats through the chasms of our conventionalities has struck me *in my own self-observation, as a mystery of nature very grand in it-*

self,—and quite a distinct mystery from Conscience. Conscience has to do with action (every thought being spiritual action), and not with abstract existence. There are moments when we are startled at the footsteps of our own being, more than at the thunders of God.

“Is it impracticable, too shadowy, too mystic, for working dramatically? . . .

“Oh, yes! of course you must often have SEEN Psyche in Visions of the Night when deep *thought* falls upon men!” she says again: (the italics being hers.) And this is a fragment of the proposed description of her Over-soul, as Emerson would call it, perhaps?

“It is some emanation from myself
Yet stands apart from me.”*

The start was similar, but the dramatic poem, fully mapped out by the two authors, would have stretched different wings over diverse angles of thought to those of my lyric-sequence of LIGHT.

F.

NOTE (GENERAL) TO BOOK IV. UNITY IN NATURE.

In continuance of the NOTE to the VOICE, in contrast to the negative teaching of that to TRINITY in NATURE, and, in consideration of the Sequence of the Fourth Book,—I think that it may be well to treat as a whole that which is expressed in its verse.

* This was the germ of *my* thought,—for many days not followed out:—

There stirred a voice in me that was not soul,
And yet was something more than Soul in me:
Nor was it intellect shaped in control
Of narrow schools or rivalries that roll
Contentious saws of reason gratingly.

The Book asserts the existence of a SPIRIT-SENSE through whose medium we may attain that Knowledge towards which Nature and Experience taken alone cannot guide us. This Lyric-Sequence contains not Songs of Dissonance, but of Harmony. The title implies that some answer is given to previous questionings: its scope is that of the Seeker satisfied,—so far as man may be satisfied.

Whilst these songs are passing through the press, Professor Max Müller, in the *Contemporary Review*, (November 1886), examines this very subject. (The words italicised by me especially illustrate the *Argument*, p. viii, where the second claim of the VOICE is summed up in the expression, *sprung from the Infinite of God, and the Finite of Man.*)

The line of thought is as follows:—How do we test, how are we assured of RIGHT and BEAUTY? We do know; we can test: men err—Man knows. Men canonise the evil; the world knows truth: fashion may decree the prevalence of the ugly, but nothing can bury the Beautiful, or banish it from human recognition. How is this?

“Is not the Beautiful without us, or, is it not rather within us? . . . We have a touchstone for discovering the Good. Whatever is unselfish is Good. But that applies to moral beings,—to men and women only,—not to Nature at large. And,—though nothing can be beautiful, whether in the acts of men, or in the works of Nature, except that which in some sense or other is good, everything that is good is also beautiful. What then is that something which added to the good makes it beautiful, that heavenly grace, that *θεοπεσὴ χάρις* which the gods alone can shed over the head and shoulders of men? . . . Some say that what we call the BEAUTIFUL is the GOOD, as seen through the golden veils of Mâyâ: others hold that what we call Good is the BEAUTIFUL, hidden in the Holy of Holies, BUT SEEN BY THE TRUE PRIEST IN THE GLORY OF NATURE, AND HEARD BY THE TRUE PROPHET IN THE STILL SMALL VOICE OF THE HEART. . . . It is a great mystery. It is so to

us as it was to Plato. . . . Nor do we all recollect the same ideal—some poor creatures remember none at all—and where we see glimpses of the Beautiful others see nothing but what is pleasing and sweet. The ideal therefore of what is beautiful is within us, that is all we know; how it came there we shall never know. IT IS NOT OF THIS LIFE, ELSE WE COULD DEFINE IT, BUT IT UNDERLIES THIS LIFE, ELSE WE COULD NOT FEEL IT. *Sometimes it meets us like a smile of Nature: sometimes like a glance of God.**

Thus, as the Songs describe, we have a mysterious power of perception which seems to find the point whence it is possible to focus the three forces in one vision. Poetry uses her pinions to arrive at this height. In this sense Poetry is taken as the highest spiritual power—the final means whereby *any* branch of Knowledge attains its point.*

* As this passage stood at first, a few days ago, it contained these words: Poetry with her wings has often attained that to which Science must afterwards cut steps in the hard rock. This, I knew, would seem extravagant to many, so I struck it out. But between penning and printing my attention was drawn to a passage strangely illustrating much that is contained in these notes, in a country paper, the *Yorkshire Weekly Post* of November 25:—"The first of the series of lectures for the people in connection with the Yorkshire College was delivered on Monday, in the Chemical Lecture Theatre, by Professor Green, on "The Birth and Growth of Worlds." There was a large attendance.

Professor Green, starting with these lines of Shelley's,

' Worlds on worlds are rolling ever from creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river—sparkling, bursting, borne away.'

said that here was a revelation for those who listened for the first time to the truth which had inspired such words.

He spoke of the new discoveries of science, and said that many would be inclined to exclaim:—"Oh, this is a poet's dream." It was the dream of one who, if there ever was a poet, was a poet, and whose science inspired his poetic utterance. What made a poet? Was it a command of majestic and sensuous language; an ear and an eye quick to catch everything that was musical and everything that was lively in man and nature; a deep sympathy with his fellow-men; an unwearying play of fancy? It was all those, and many gifts besides. But there was one thing that more than all was essential, and that more than all marked off the poet from the human crowd, and that was that he had been able to approach somewhat nearer than common mortals to that ineffable science of light from whence all knowledge came. Hence it arose that he was above the average level of the men of his day, saw things which were hidden even from the wise and prudent, and which would not be recognised as truths till after he was gone. So much that he sang was by his contemporaries set down as a wild dream, an exuberant fancy; but the generations that followed found it to be a sober truth. The poet's inspiration did not very often concern itself with the concrete

Arrived at this point of view, what does man perceive? At present his footing is too precarious to allow of exact observation. Yet men who have attained from thence to glimpse the Infinite seem to agree that not only are there great laws unified throughout the Universe of which more is generally known at each epoch, but that there are divine Harmonies therein, to which, alone of all Nature, man seems to have power to attune himself, but of which the perception is personal and to a great extent incommunicable.

In the physical world an instance may be given: (the oldest and simplest is the best:)—Fire is a good servant, and a bad master: man cannot change its destructive powers yet he makes fire through its certain result serve his personal ends. Thus, as signified in the *SONG OF FINDING* (confined simply to placing himself in communion with Nature), man partakes in all that she has, when he knows how to do whatever her master-forces can effect. By watching and adapting himself to her ways, he learns that he can or will be able to meet the most immutable Law so as practically to control it. And a spirit-sense—far removed from the adaptive power of animals,—guides the discoverer—if, perhaps, not altogether the applier—of her secrets.

But, further the *SONG OF RECEIVING* attempts to indicate that

objects of sense. Knowledge and truth and virtue were his theme. He busied himself more with the hidden mysteries of the hidden life of man. But every now and then there arose before him the vision of some great physical truth hitherto unapprehended or only dimly guessed at by science. That he bodied forth, it might be in somewhat obscure poetic diction. Little heed was paid to what he said. It might be that he himself scarcely realised the full meaning of his own words. They stood like the response of an oracle which the faithless laughed to scorn, but for the accomplishment of which the faithful were content to wait. And in the fulness of time the accomplishment came, when the slow and painstaking labours of the scientific investigator demonstrated to the world at large what was to the poet a flash of inspiration. It was to a poet that a truth in botany, which might be said to give a unity to that science, was revealed. It was a poet who foresaw all the triumph which steam had realised, and some which it had not yet compassed. Were Shelley's lines, which he had quoted, in any way a case in point? Had science confirmed his inspired utterance? As yet science could scarcely be said to have done as much as that, but it had gone a long way towards it. Shelley knew nothing of the scientific truths which he (Professor Green) was about to tell them; but he had nearly hit the mark. It was not absolutely certain that Shelley's view was right, but he went a great way towards the truth, and the balance of probability in favour of its being true was very large indeed."

the world of Nature has its spiritual counterpart. This is no new idea. The following passage puts the argument very pithily.

Professor Bowen (of Harvards, U.S.) translated it from a commentator on Schelling :—

“Matter and mind exhibiting the same conflict of opposed forces, must themselves be capable of Union in a higher identity. There is the same Absolute in Nature as in mind, and their harmony is no mere reflection of thought. If you maintain that it is we who only transfer this idea to Nature, then never upon your soul has any dream dawned of what, for us, Nature is, and should be. Nature shall be the visible soul, and soul the invisible Nature. Nature appears thus as the counterpart of mind. . . . For this reason there is something symbolical in every thing organic. . . . The whole system of the Universe, therefore is a species of organisation, formed from a centre outward, and rising ever from lower to higher stages.”

Now, if the spiritual Life *has* anything within it corresponding to the Physical Universe, man's relation to both must be identical, and the functions of the Spirit-sense acting in the same manner would produce a similar result : firstly, of theoretical Harmony ; secondly, of practical Helpfulness. Therefore, addressing the Spirit-sense (in its personal manifestation, the VOICE), the Seeker is justified in exclaiming :—

“What Nature has for earth thou hast for me !”

So it is indicated that where man finds himself in harmony with the Spiritual World (in proportion to personal capacity, courage, and self-control), he becomes able to derive from it the same kind of power in all things pertaining to human relations with its life, as he who knows Physical Law is able to exercise in the spheres comprehended in the Universe of matter. Thus, it shows the secret of those capable of governing other minds in the realms of thought—(it being allowed that such power is *of itself* neither good nor evil)—: we call those who use this Spirit-sense for such pur-

poses, Prophets, Teachers, Leaders, etc.;—and as we hear their words we recognise that—with all their imperfection of vision and of expression, and with our deficiency of comprehension—these men do speak the things that they have SEEN and KNOW as existent.

The SONG OF ASPIRATION is the natural cry of the soul which thus has found—not attainment, not final rest, but—at once by contrast a sense of imperfection, and a certainty that (though veiled in mystery, parabled through Nature, symbolised by man's intellect), for the soul of man there *is* light, and that the path of progress has no finite end.

In this way *Book IV* shows: firstly, Nature as the physical aid to human energy—no private instructor, but a demonstrator of Law; secondly, that, though continuous she is felt to be finite and imperfect with the Perfect and the Infinite "*beyond*"; thirdly, that she appears to have a Counterpart in a Spiritual world of which *those most likely to know* inform us; and, finally, that, at one point not removed from her sphere, there seems to be a centre where some perceive a Vision of God, Nature, and Man, in perfect harmony of thought.

MY LADYE AND OTHERS.*

—:0:—

A FEW OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

“The sentiments are sometimes illumined by a flash of bright and surpassing fancy ; there is something satirical, something philosophical, something Arcadian in them : they are not much, if at all, inferior to the early productions of many distinguished poets, and there is no saying to what height the author may attain, when the lady who is to inspire his more mature lays reveals herself and begins her duties. Under her fostering care he may become more famous, in his respective branches of composition, than Juvenal, Lucretius, and Theocritus ; or, to come nearer home, than Thomas Moore, on whose lines, rather than on those of any ancient classic, one would imagine that he must be fashioned.”—*Illustrated London News*.

“It was not necessary for this book to be produced, as it has been, with an elegance of type and binding,—remarkable even in this age of costly publication—for it to achieve success. It possesses greater merits far than those of mere quaint typography and artistic covering. These detract rather than enhance its merit, for perhaps not a few will be led to think that the contents are the least important part of the work. Indeed, the ‘sunflower’ upon the binding is rather alarming. That glorious flower, so loved by great artists, and especially by one of the greatest England has produced—Mulready—has of late, as the emblem of an objectionable and

* FIELD AND TUER, 50, Leadenhall Street, E.C.

morbid band of poetasters, been rendered only too ridiculous ; and many will confess that a certain misgiving has crept over them when first they saw this book, not but that it is really both quaint and elegant, but there has come over the majority a wholesome feeling, akin to absolute terror, at the mere sight of anything approaching æstheticism. Fortunately, however, Mr. Gilbert-Smith's poetry is manly and unaffected, and in no way even faintly suggestive of the unpleasant nonentities to which we have been but too much accustomed. Without making any boastful assertion of his attachment to Christianity, this New Poet is to be immediately congratulated upon the profoundly religious tone of his work. His reverence for God and Christ and for the forms and morality of Christianity are not unnecessarily prominent ; but, as did the great poets of old, whenever it is natural for him to mention directly the Deity, or to allude to Him, Mr. Gilbert-Smith does so with sincere reverence. This is, indeed, a great quality just now, when our poets either glory in their æsthetical sentimentality or injure religion by rendering her ridiculous by their patronising airs and weak affectations. Admirably conceived, worthy even of the author of the 'Rape of the Lock,' is the charming satire 'Beauty at a Dinner Party,' (p. 12 quoted). One of the early poems in the book entitled 'Weary,' is of high merit. It contains some noteworthy lines. The following, for instance (p. 6 quoted). Two poems, one to 'Toledo' and the other to 'Cadix,' remind, without suggesting any trace of imitation, the reader of Lord Byron. The interior of the magnificent Cathedral at Toledo is thus beautifully described (pp. 91, 92, and 93 quoted).—*Morning Post* (2nd notice).

"He possesses culture and has also a considerable mastery over varied forms of metre."—*The Scotsman*.

"We have seen many points to admire in this delicious volume of verse."—*Public Opinion*.

"The writer has poetical talent."—*Daily News*.

"This is a volume to gladden the eye of the genuine book-lover. Mr. Gilbert-Smith's poems show a keen observation and a varied

power, which not only make them well worth attention, but give promise of better things to come from the same quarter. We expect to hear of this writer again.—*The Queen*.

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